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ADVENTURES

DURING

A JOURNEY OVERLAND

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EGYPT, SYRIA, AND THE HOLY LAND.

By MAJOR SKINNER, 31st Reg.

AUTHOR OF "EXCURSIONS IN INDIA."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE SECOND VOLUME.

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ADVENTURES

DURING

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CHAPTER I.

Mahometan Sabbath.—Procession of Shrouded Women.—Mountebanks.—Richly-dressed Turks.—Mourners round a Tomb.—Picturesque Scene.—Women of Damascus.—The new Pasha, Sherif Bey. — Eastern Tournament. — Favourite Garden. — Strange effect produced by the Frank Dress.—Convent of the Franciscans.—My bed-room.—Complaints of the Monks — An Offender Punished.—Disastrous consequences of attempting public Improvements.—Convent of the Capuchin Order.—Solitary Monk.—Mr. Tod, an English Merchant.—Punishment for circulating the Bible.

MARCH 14th, Friday, the Mahometan Sabbath. After mid-day prayers, the Mussulman population was all in motion, on their way to pass the afternoon in the gardens that con-

stitute their paradise. Travellers may write for ever, but they cannot hope to convey to one unacquainted with Eastern scenes, the appearance of an Eastern gathering. I joined in the throng that was passing through the principal gate, and, as I was still in the European dress, attracted an uncomfortable degree of notice.

I was bewildered with the variety of figures in the crowd; a line of women, enveloped in white sheets, filed slowly towards the burial-ground, where they usually take up their positions as if they were on their return to their graves; their faces hidden with dark-coloured handkerchiefs, or so shrouded within the folds of their linen coverings, that not a feature was to be seen. They seemed all of the same dimensions, and moved with the same gait; their feet, in yellow boots, just appeared below the white drapery, and gave them the air, as they waddled along, of gigantic ducks. Mountebanks and musicians threw themselves in the way; the former tumbling and grimacing before every fresh party that came from the gate, and the latter shrieking and drumming in their ears

till they received a few "paras" for their pains. A perpetual clinking of brass cups announced where cool water was to be bought; and bread and fruit were cried for sale in the name of the Prophet, so loud that it was heard above all the other noises. Richly-dressed Turks, upon horses burthened with their finery, pranced along the road, their attendants carrying djerids beside them; while more sober figures, upon white asses or mules, moved deliberately on with their amber-mouthed pipes at their lips. The season is mild, the colours of the men's dresses are various and gay,—pink, white, and sky-blue flaunting in the wind as they gallop.

Within an arch, close to the gateway, stands a tomb, near which is a stall for coffee. Many women were collected round the former, as if in performance of some rite in devotion of the saint within it, while a party of female mourners had chosen this day to call upon some departed relative. I could hear the name of Fatima occasionally shouted with no weak lungs. At the head of every grave I observed a pot sunk into the earth, in which many women placed flowers as they passed; there was not

one grave in the well-filled cemetery that had not its offering nearly full.

A little distance beyond the gate there is a clear space of about two hundred feet long, where the Turks practise the djerid; above it, at one end, is a heap of earth that has grown into a little hill; at the foot of it runs a brook from the river, for the purpose of irrigating the patches of barley, in the midst of which a few poplars and walnut-trees, now without leaves, stand. The Bacahda runs with great swiftness at the termination of this scene. On its banks are many grave parties smoking their pipes upon the rich carpets they have carried out to repose on, while the Turks are galloping their horses about till they can hardly stand. The women are seated upon the rising ground I have mentioned, in admiration of them; for in Damascus, although they must not be seen, they have ample privilege to see. Sitting in the graceless manner of Oriental dames, in rows one above the other so closely veiled, they add but little to the beauty of the picture. When Jewish or Christian women join this scene, they generally sit apart, resting

against the trunk of a tree, or grouped in the most retired corner of the river's bank. They chat and smoke sometimes with their veils removed. I am indebted much to the novelty of my dress among them, for obtaining a view of their faces. Anxious to see me, they withdraw their screens, and display for an instant the most beautiful countenances I have ever beheld.

The women of Damascus are esteemed the handsomest in the East; and although their charms are, I have no doubt, much enhanced by the difficulty of seeing them, they sometimes, from behind their tantalizing clouds, pour a light that might dazzle the most discreet traveller. There is a very graceful style of coquetry in an Eastern belle, in the manner in which she displays her arms, which are the roundest and most perfect imaginable. The fingers, covered with rings, and dyed pink under the nails, play about the folds of the drapery, as if anxious to restore it to its place, in which I observe they never can succeed when there is a sly opportunity of disclosing the beauty it is meant to conceal. Large blue eyes are common among the

Christian women, some of whom are exceedingly fair; and there is a grace in the turban beyond all the arts of a civilized toilette.

The new Pasha, Sherif Bey, who is governor-general for Mehemet Ali in Syria, was seated by the river, with the officers of his court about him, until the djerid-playing was in full animation; when, mounting a fine and splendidly caparisoned horse, he darted among the riders and joined in the sport with great skill and activity. This is a manly exercise, and probably the only species of tournament in the present day. Bright eyes are in abundance to cheer the knights, but the chivalry of the East is too dull to be moved by such transient flashes.

This place is the favourite resort about Damascus; some parties saunter through the narrow lanes, however, or seek the greater retirement of more cultivated spots, where now the apricot-trees are in full blossom: coffee is made wherever any number of people is collected; and men, with pipes to hire, stand by the side of the numerous streamlets that run through the spot, ready to fill the bowls with water, fresh for each new smoker. In the

greatest thoroughfares are crowds of beggars invoking blessings on the charitable, and jugglers endeavouring by their tricks and activity to intercept the gift that seems intended for them.

I rambled all the afternoon among these singular scenes, giving nearly as much amusement to those who had never seen the Frank dress before, as I received from all that was new to me. It is only six months since an European has been able with safety to appear in his own costume, and very few have yet been here to display it. I am to many, therefore, a most singular exhibition. I appear so mean a figure in comparison with those of the flowing robes about me, that I am miserably out of conceit of my wardrobe, and have no occasion to be flattered with the notice I have attracted. The Turkish women mutter "God is merciful" as I pass them, and seem to call for protection from my ill-omened aspect; the Christian women laugh aloud, and chatter with their sweet voices comments far from favourable to my appearance. As I walked in front of a group of these merry dames, I drew my handkerchief from

my coat pocket, and naturally enough applied it to wipe the dust from my eyes. I was assailed by such a shout of laughter, that I thought I had committed some frightful indiscretion. I stood in great perplexity, with my handkerchief in my hand, evidently an object of intense interest, for many women came shuffling from a distance to see the show. This was at length ended by my returning the cause of all the amusement to its place; when, forgetting their propriety, they clapped their hands, and laughed with double enjoyment.

It is not a difficult matter to become the wonder of a city: and as yet unconscious of the way in which I had merited to be one, I followed the crowd, as the evening approached, towards the convent. When we had entered the gate, a little boy, struck by the singular shape of a round hat which I wore, clapped his hands and called out, "Abu-tanjier!" "Abu-tanjier!" "the father of a cooking-pot! look at the father of a cooking-pot!" This was echoed from every side; for the resemblance a hat bears to the common cooking-vessel with a rim to it, is too

strong to escape, and I was pursued by the shouts of the people till I was nearly out of sight.

A woman, who had heard the uproar, came to her door, and, as I had out-walked the crowd, she could not resist the chance of gratifying her curiosity, and begged me to show her my hat. I took it off with great gravity, and put it in her hands; I believe she was disappointed to find that it was not a cooking-pot in reality: I rescued it from her in time to save it, or it might have been lodged in one of the colleges, as a perpetual puzzle to the learned of the city.

It was just dusk when I reached the quiet convent of the Franciscans. There are in it eight monks, who are here principally for the study of Arabic; it is endowed by the King of Spain as a royal academy for the instruction of this language. The good fathers are exceedingly kind, but preserve a most rigid fast. I forgot that it was Lent, until I returned to supper; when, after a long day without food, I was forced to be satisfied with a broiled cauli-

flower, for, being Friday, no fish could be eaten: poor Hassan was even more discontented than myself.

I went to bed at eight o'clock, that I might sleep away my appetite. My bedstead is adorned with saints. Thomas Aquinas frowns down upon me from the top. If he be put there to draw devotion in the morning, he is well placed; but it rather startles me to cast my eyes the moment they open upon so stern a figure.

The monks have many sad tales to tell of the treatment they have received, and the extortion they have been subject to, during the term of their residence here: private insult was so common that they never opened the door to a Turk, for none ever knocked without the intention of plundering them. Their greatest torment has just been beheaded by order of the present Pasha, who managed the matter in the good old way of the East. He had sent for him to answer some complaint: instead of immediate obedience, the offender struck the messenger, when a party of soldiers was sent to bring him by force to the presence. He was a man of great wealth and influence in the city.

"You have resisted my servant," said the Pasha, on his approach. "I have," was the reply. "Then off with his head!" And it was struck off within a few paces of the divan, where the body lay for the rest of the day as an encouragement to others. Whenever this man wanted money, he called on the monks: he was of too great power to be refused admittance, and they were compelled to open the door to him; he named the sum he required, and, drawing his sword, stood in the court-yard threatening death to all if it were not immediately paid. When he received it, he called for a bottle of aqua-vitæ, and in derision drank to their prosperity, while he insisted upon their joining in the pledge.

I have no great sympathy for the race of monks, although, as a traveller, I am grateful for the hospitality they practise throughout Palestine and Syria. They are clogs on the advancement of civilization and instruction among their own flocks, and by abetting, if not encouraging them, in their ignorance and superstition, keep Christianity in the contempt in which it is held by the Mahometans. They

have suffered so much cruelty and persecution here, however, that it is impossible not to feel for them.

The best paved street in Damascus is that in which the front of the convent stands. It was in such bad order, some years ago, that the monks resolved to repair it whenever their finances would enable them to do so. They at length commenced the work to the great joy of the Christian population, who would have a capital place to lounge in during the various offices of their festivals. The governor took no notice of the work during its progress; but when it was finished, he sent to demand on what authority they had dared to improve a street in Damascus, and ordered them instantly to pay 30,000 piastres to secure the privilege of walking upon it. The poor monks were in despair, and declared they could never hope to afford so exorbitant a sum. The Pasha seized the superior and put him in prison, resolved to keep him there until he should be ransomed by his brethren. This was at length effected, and fifty yards of pavement was gained to the church.

Close to the Franciscan is a convent of the Capuchin order, where one solitary friar resides, who has been for many years a recluse in the populous city. He is an elderly man, of a care-worn aspect, and accosted me as I walked through the street, being quite happy to hear me talk Italian; for as the neighbouring friars are Spanish, he has but little opportunity of hearing his native tongue.

March 15th.—I had the happiness to meet an English merchant in the city this morning, who came into it soon after the troops under Ibrahim Pasha had taken possession of it. With him are two gentlemen on their way to Bagdad, with whom I hope I may be so fortunate as to travel,—Captain Cotton on his route to India, and a converted Jew, who means to reside in the city of the Caliphs as a missionary among his own nation. Mr. Tod has been but a few months here, and has already gained a high reputation for the name of Englishman; the extent of his trade has as much surprised the Damascenes, as his manner of dealing has won their respect. It is fortunate, I think, that the first English merchant who has ever

settled in this bigoted city, should be one so calculated to fix the national character in a high position.

While living in the convent, I am led naturally to think a good deal about the monks and their doings. I find the superior has denounced all the Christians who may frequent Mr. Tod's house, or take anything from him, on account of his having either sold, or circulated gratis, some Arabic copies of the Bible. I happened to be in the superior's room, when a youth of about twelve years of age came in to answer for the enormity of having received one; he excused himself as well as he could, but without effect, until he declared, with great energy, that he had sent the poison back. He was saved excommunication, which is the threat held over the curious of the congregation. I was not prepared for this act of a Christian bigot in a Mussulman town. As very few books have come back, and as many are still applied for,—I suspect the priest may find his bulls of little force.

CHAPTER II.

Policy of Sherif Bey.—Conquest of Damascus.—Interview with the Pasha.—His heterodoxy as a Mahometan.—A Priest's scruples overcome.—The Pasha's adventure with an English Lady.—His conclusions thereon.—Specimen of Eastern Justice.—Sunday in Damascus.—Furious Sermon.—Female Curiosity.—House of Ananias.—Tomb of St. George.—St. Paul's Place of Refuge.—Caravan for Bagdad.—Gate of St. Thomas.—Whimsical Scene.—Coffee-houses.—Holiday making.

I VISITED "Sherif Bey," the governor-general. He was for some time Pasha in Upper Egypt, and is, I believe, connected by marriage with Mehemet Ali. He is deemed on all hands a very fit person for his present command; he has much subdued the spirit of the Turks of the city; they are not permitted to carry arms; and the pompous figures who, a short time ago, were laden with pistols, and wielded their swords at will, now creep about the streets with an unusual show of humility. The houses are well supplied with arms. Sherif Bey has

not yet ventured to disarm the town, which he is anxious to do; the time is not quite ripe for this as there are but six hundred Egyptian soldiers in garrison, and a population of two hundred thousand opposed, as the belief is, to the government of the Egyptian Pasha. The most singular feature of his conquest of Syria is, that he has kept possession of the towns against the opinion and good-will of the inhabitants, with scarcely men enough to guard the gates. Advancing boldly towards Constantinople, he leaves, if not avowed enemies, the coldest friends in his rear, with not one thousand men in any quarter to make head against them. The Turks have bowed, they say, to Fate.

"What do you think of Ibrahim Pasha's army?" asked Sherif Bey of me. "They are unnecessary," I replied; "he conquers with his name:" at which he laughed repeatedly, and muttered, "Most true; they fly when they hear it." For the honour of Damascus, the Turks thought it necessary to show a front to the invading army, and after a great deal of boast and vapour in the town, marched out, in careless order, and with clumsy arms: they no

sooner saw the regular army of the Egyptian force, which was commanded to hold its fire, until the mass was well within range, while a body of Bedouin cavalry stood ready to follow them on the expected rout, than they gave it up, and, facing about, returned towards the city, where they were received with hoots and laughter by the people, many of whom had assembled, in expectation of their discomfiture, on the walls. Thus yielded Damascus, which ever since its foundation has been the scene of war and bloodshed.

I found the Pasha sitting in his divan, with an Armenian secretary kneeling at his feet, and a most grave and reverend moolwie, or priest, cross-legged on a couch beside him. Our conversation was full of the usual polite speeches, which in all tongues but English sound agreeable enough; the language of compliment is a study in the East, which it is necessary for well-bred men to acquire, for there is an invariable routine of inquiries and replies that never can be evaded.

Sherif Bey is far from an orthodox Mahometan, and is accused by the Turks of the town of

having smoked and drank coffee publicly during Ramadan. He was heard frequently to address the salutation of peace to the infidel too,—a much greater offence, I fancy; toleration to an unbeliever being a higher crime in a Mussulman than any forbidden indulgence to himself. The Pasha hopes by his manner towards the Christians, to encourage them, and to mortify their late tyrants. The Syrian Christians of every sect, with the reaction natural to minds that have been long in slavery, have rushed into the opposite extreme, and by their ostentatious defiance of the restraints to which they used slavishly to submit, are, I fear, earning a dreadful day of retribution, should a change in Eastern politics take place. The priests are alarmed for them, and preach against the vanities they have hurried into with great zeal. Every Christian now rides on horseback, and flaunts in the forbidden colours; some even venture to throw the djerid, and are as overbearing in their manners as their masters were in their proudest days. Emancipated slaves, however, while the liberty is new, are not easily controlled. The Christians in Syria may tame

down to a more rational demeanour, as the privilege of choosing between a white and a black turban grows familiar.

After the little cup of coffee, Sherif Bey introduced a bottle of liqueur, and enjoyed a glass of it amazingly. The priest, to whom he offered one, coquetted with it for several minutes, making the most positive refusal, but at the same time ogling it, as the Pasha perceived with a longing eye. "O Effendi, la, la!" he exclaimed: "Alla forbid!" passing his fingers repeatedly from his breast to his lips, and from his lips to his forehead: "no, no; by your soul don't ask me." The servant stood like a mute before him, with the glass in his hand, and I thought I detected an understanding between them. The governor, who had seen this comedy acted before, I dare say, merely pointed to the glass and uttered the word "Drink!" The coy moolwie gave way, and we resumed our conversation. The interpreter, an Armenian, is one of the best I ever met. We carried on a laughing dialogue without one pause.

During his government in Upper Egypt, the Pasha had met many English, and professed to

like them amazingly. "I am determined," said he, "that your countrymen shall travel as safely even to Bagdad, as I should be able to do in England." He related his meeting with a very pretty English woman, who was on her way to India, at Luxor, I think, where she dined with him, very much to his astonishment: when he invited her husband she accompanied him, and by such an action so perplexed the governor, that he has, I dare say, told the story to every European who has visited him since. I trembled for the fame of my fair countrywoman as he warmed in his narration of the dinner. The moolwie looked and hummed in so intelligible a manner, that I saw this unbelieving houri was deeply lost in his estimation.

At length, stroking his beard with great complacency, "What could she have come for?" said the Pasha. I replied, in a few words, that the customs of our nations were in that respect very different,—that ladies mingled in society with men. But it is impossible to remove from the mind of an Eastern the notion of great impropriety in this: he remembered the name of the couple, and asked me in so mysterious a

manner whether the husband was not "a good easy man," that I could not resist laughing, and I fear very much that by so doing I rather confirmed the fancy he had taken. I leave fair travellers to draw their own conclusions from this anecdote; and to judge whether they had better fall into the prejudices of the East, or risk the ill construction that will always arise from breaking through them.

I had a specimen of Eastern justice in the course of my visit. A negro boy, slave to some merchant in the city, had assisted in robbing him to a great amount, and was brought in a prisoner to be examined by the Pasha himself. The boy, ten years old, was escorted by two well-armed Turks to the presence. "How did you rob your master?" asked the Pasha. "As I am your sacrifice, O Effendi, I know nothing of it," said the boy. "Take him out and give him fifty strokes." Away he went, and we continued to talk amid the cries of the bastinadoed youth. He returned, writhing with pain, and still denied the crime. "Fifty more," said the Pasha; but, before he reached the place of execution, he confessed the robbery, and was

brought back in the midst of his agony to relate the manner in which he had effected it. The household drew round, together with some people who from curiosity had come into the court-yard. If the boy had been an Arabian story-teller, he could not have been listened to with more intense interest. As others had been concerned, the boy was remanded, and I did not hear the result of the trial.

March 16th. — Sunday is a greater day of jubilee even than Friday; for although the Christians are not so numerous, they seem more generally engaged in amusing themselves than the Turks. At daylight the church of the convent was quite full; the women were crowded into a latticed gallery, completely veiled in their shrouds, while the men knelt upon the floor. The church is a very fine one. After mass, one of the friars ascended the pulpit, and preached a sermon in the most furious manner possible. It seemed to be entirely directed to the gallery, and his violent gestures showed that he was attacking some gentle vanities without mercy. I gathered from the men about me that it was a tirade against

fine dressing; a denunciation which, when I glanced my eyes towards the sheeted objects of his address, seemed at first sight, to say the least of it, superfluous. It is nevertheless possible, that under the linen mask the richest costumes may be hidden. Decoration of the person is not the less a female failing here, for the difficulty there is in displaying it.* In their houses the women are beautiful. The Syrian costume is too well known, however, for me to paint it.

As the congregation was coming from the church, I strolled up and down the pavement. I have already spoken of my attraction to all the Christian children in Damascus about me: in a little time the women took courage to approach me also. Among them were some of the merry ones whose laughter had been so excited by the management of my pocket-handkerchief on Friday. By their signs and actions I discovered at length how I had caused their mirth, for they prayed me to play the scene over again. When I had gratified this reasonable curiosity, so many fair hands were thrust into my coat-pockets, that I struggled with some difficulty to escape, lest my clothes should

be torn to pieces, and distributed throughout the city as relics of some extraordinary monster. It is not surprising that a Frank, dressed in his own habit, hitherto so rare an object in Damascus, should create a great sensation, for a being so totally different in all respects to themselves could scarcely fall among them. In manner, in figure, in the mode of walking and the way of sitting down, who can be more opposite than an European and an Oriental? In our customs, too, we equally perplex them; for every answer that I was able to give to the numerous questions of my fair inquisitors but led them more to wonder. When I confessed the circumstance of being yet single, "Why, why, O Frank?" they all cried and crowded still closer about me to have the mystery explained.

The old servant, of the convent, who was standing at the door, perceiving the sensation, came to my relief, and interpreted to me a question that an old woman had proposed with some anxiety, for I despaired of giving a satisfactory reply to the other. "Is it true," said she, "that in Frangistan, men and women walk

arm-in-arm even in the streets?" I could not deny the fact. This had such an effect upon my audience, that I felt nearly ashamed of the confession, for I knew not how to vindicate it to them: my lectures after this soon ended; and, more confounded than enlightened, my listeners shuffled off and left me.

I visited in the middle of the day the House of Ananias, which is still shown, and descended through a great deal of rubbish to a species of cave, where he resided, for throughout this country they must imagine that in earlier days people burrowed in the earth. All the houses that are exhibited as abodes of celebrated or pious men, are in grottoes or caves below the ground.

The Christians assemble very much about the narrow walks that encompass the town, and sit in long lines by the banks of the Bacahda, or gather in the neighbourhood of their own burial-ground, near to which is a tomb, apparently much visited, said by them to be that of St. George. How he came to be buried in Damascus would not be an easy matter to conjecture; there is the tomb, however, enclosed in

a wooden cage, and those who belong to the Greek church hold it in some sort of veneration.

In the burial-ground is an arch, where it is pretended St. Paul hid himself after he had been let down in a basket from the wall. The precise house, too, is shown, from which he escaped. The circumstance that houses still stand on the walls with their windows towards the country, and hanging immediately over the ditch, is singular in a fortification of the present day, as so likely to facilitate escape, and even entrance to an enemy. This, at any rate, proves how little Damascus has changed from its earliest days.

The gate of St. Paul leads to the Christian resort, and that of the Camels to the rendezvous of the Arabs, where I found the caravan for Bagdad collecting its numbers. A party of Bedouins came down a few nights ago, and carrying away seventy of the best camels from the Shiekh, threw the merchants into great alarm. The gate of greatest thoroughfare is "Bab-Tooma" or the gate of Thomas, so called probably from the remembrance of the Greek

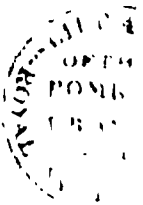
who set so fine an example to the city in its defence against the Saracens, where the crucifix was erected, and the New Testament carried in a solemn procession to its foot.

Among the whimsical works in the city and its neighbourhood, there is one carried on at this gate to a great extent: several men, with their arms bare, are pulling with all their strength, for several hours a day, at what appear at first unusually long hanks of white yarn. I stood some time observing this scene, before I discovered that the cables were made of flour and sugar, which, when well kneaded together in this manner, is allowed to grow crisp, and sold as the favourite sweetmeat of the bazar.

There is a bridge across the river, on the opposite side of which are some fine gardens: at some of the gates are coffee-houses hanging over the stream, which runs rapidly beneath them; the Turks sit on cushions, enjoying the refreshing coolness, and fixed in their usual silence by the loud noise it makes. I strolled along the opposite bank to that most frequented, and surveyed with astonishment the singular

manner of making holiday: as the men and women sit apart, the pic-nics that many groups were engaged in have very little sociability in them. Enjoyment in public belongs to the men alone; the Christians and Jews follow the example of the Turks, and do not even converse with the women, who were seated in a line by the margin of the stream, so close together that they appeared like wild geese suddenly alighted. Their faces were partially uncovered, and it would not be too fanciful to compare the bright eyes that glanced from the numerous white clouds with which their figures were enveloped to the milky way.

I know not how wiser travellers are affected by such scenes, but I cannot overcome a most uncomfortable sensation when long strings of these shrouded beings glide past me. I feel as if I were roaming in the Shades; and while they sit moping by the river, or steal towards it with slow paces, they remind me of the plaintive spectres that are doomed to stray by the shores of the Stygian flood.



CHAPTER III.

Difficulty of traversing Damascus.—Public Fountains.—Interior of the Houses.—Mosques.—Effect of the Muezzin's Call.—Perpetual use of the name of the Deity.—Bazars.—Scenes resembling those in "The Arabian Nights."—Public exposure of Culprits.—The Barbers' Shops.—Vapour Baths of the East.—Khan of Ashad Pasha.—Apathy of the Merchants.—Method of striking a bargain.—Beggars.—Singing Women.—Bedouin Arabs.—Arrangements for proceeding to Bagdad.—Our intended Guide.—Treaty with him broken off.—Abd-al-Kerim, our new Ally.—My change of Costume.—Flights of Pigeons.—View from the summit of our house into the courts of those adjoining.—My fair Enchantress.—The Romance dispelled.—The Lady's History.

FEW towns are so difficult to thread as Damascus. The streets are narrow, without any particular marks in them, and have a large door at each end, which is always closed at sunset, or very soon after, as a protection against thieves, and, I have read somewhere, wives: I proved, however, that a very small bribe will open it at any hour of the night, for there is always a gate-keeper at hand. The houses pre-

sent no more than mud walls, with an ill-built latticed window at a considerable height. They are sometimes constructed on arches that hang across the streets, making it quite dark. Wooden rafters, too, when the arch has not been turned, are visible frequently from below, and render the way still more gloomy.

No town, however, can be better supplied with water; numerous fountains are in the streets, and in the court of every house there is also one, or even two or three. Within, the houses are very magnificent. Their airiness is exceedingly delightful; balconies, with gaily painted chambers opening into them, hang over the paved court, in which the fountain plays beneath the shade of orange and lemon trees. Elevated recesses, gilded most richly, and spread with rarest carpets, form the lower rooms. When lounging upon softest cushions in the most voluptuous "far-niente" manner, the Turks enjoy the fragrance of the blossoms and the refreshing patter of their "jets d'eaux."

In such a climate there is real luxury in this mode of whiling away the hottest part of the day. To complete the soft-sounding picture of

such an existence, I will add, that they sip from cups of porcelain iced sherbet made of violets or roses. Who would not wish to dwell in Damascus? or who, on being forced to quit it, would not sigh for "the pleasant banks of the Pharphar."

The mosques are numerous in the city, and the principal ones are very fine; with them, however, Christian travellers have little to do. There is something striking in the glance we can obtain of the devout forms kneeling in long lines within the areas of the buildings, bowing their heads together towards their holy city. The most languid Mahometan quits without a pang the scene of luxury I have described, on the sound of the Muezzin's call from the nearest minaret, and prays with as much fervour as if he had risen from a hermit's cell.

Christians are much struck by the frequent use of the name of God among Mussulmans; it is invoked at all times and for all purposes, yet not lightly, but with an astonishing degree of solemnity in the tone and manner, considering the frequency of the practice. In walking through the bazars, you hear it pronounced on

every side; in beginning to deal, in the examination of the article, on completing the bargain, all is referred to Providence. "Peace be to you!" is the commencement of every offer to buy; and whether the purchase be effected or not, "Go in peace!" concludes.

The bazars are superb, many of them roofed in are at all times cool and dry. In an Eastern city, each commodity has generally its own particular mart. If in pursuit of a pair of slippers, there is a long street with nothing to be seen but slippers on each side of it; all has the appearance of a fair in a town in Europe; every lane of shops is crowded to excess, and the merchant is at all times vaunting his goods with a loud voice. The scene is one of such variety and of so much amusement, that I never felt disposed to leave the bazars of Damascus. Second-hand goods are sold by auction, as well as clothes and bedding; a man hurries through the street with the article hoisted over his head, while the seller screams out the bidding: the shops being all open, every thing is done in public. If a merchant is put into a passion by a cus-

tomer, he jumps up among his bales, and storms and raves to his fullest desire, without the least interruption.

Women are as numerous as men in the streets, and make all the household purchases: the shopmen have an air of gallantry in their way of dealing with their muffled customers that seems to invite them to linger about their purchases, for I noticed frequently groups of fair ladies who remained an unconscionable time to listen to the soft tones of the shopkeeper. I thought so much of the "Arabian Nights" when these scenes were before me, that I could not resist loitering about them. Black slave-girls very generally attended the better class of women in the bazar, as carefully veiled however as their mistresses; and it was only by the peculiar white of the eye that they could be detected. The ready-made clothes shops give the most entertaining scene, where cheapness more than fashion is considered, and the poorer people dress themselves in a mixture of all the costumes of the East: they try the articles on, either in the midst of the thoroughfare, or on

the board of the tailor, and loungers stop frequently to offer their opinions on the style and fit.

Sometimes a procession of great men on horseback pushes through the narrow bazars, and culprits are led about the streets as an example to the people. A Jew, who had exchanged Spanish dollars at a higher rate than that proclaimed by the governor, was shaved for the offence, and escorted through the town, preceded by a man who shouted out his crime, and called upon all to take warning. The Jew was heartily ashamed of his notoriety, and endeavoured to hide his insulted chin. A Christian merchant, of very great respectability and wealth, received for the same disobedience of the proclamation, one hundred bastinadoes, and was nearly killed by the infliction. They had each given eighteen piastres for the Spanish dollar, the rate having been fixed at sixteen the day before.

This manner of punishment does not denote very even justice. The Jew may have a very respectable beard long before the Christian is able to walk; the Turks, however, say he feels

the disgrace more than the other can do the pain. The sacred character that the beard has ever had in the East, belongs not to those that adorn the Christian chin, although some have most venerable ones. Sherif Bey has shown some humour as well as mercy in his punishment of the Jew; for the barber is not, I understand, a very common executioner.

The most laughable exhibition in the city is in the barbers' shops, which are numerous in the neighbourhood of the public baths. They are long narrow rooms, with benches on each side, on which I have sometimes seen a dozen Turks squatting in a line, with their bare heads poked out in the most patient manner, to be kneaded, after having been shaved, between the hands of the barber, who rolls them about as if they were balls quite unconnected with the shoulders they belong to.

The vapour baths of the East have been frequently described, but in no way to give an idea of the singular scene they present, in any travels that I have read. The first time I entered one, I felt an uncomfortable presentiment that I was about to witness some myste-

rious rites in the very temple of Luxury herself. The initiation of the outer chamber is sufficiently awful—half-naked figures clattering on wooden shoes across the marble floor, or exhausted forms, covered with sheets, lying in a state of languor on the carpets within the recesses that serve for dressing. When I had thrown off my clothes, and twisted a turban round my head, and a sheet about my waist, I followed my guide through a dark passage, which grew warmer and warmer at every step, the steam becoming so thick as to threaten suffocation. Beyond this is a chamber with raised seats about it, on which people lay extended like corpses, men rubbing them with camel's-hair gloves, patting them with their hands, or pulling their joints, as if they hoped to dislocate them. When I passed through this silent scene, for there was no sound but the occasional slap that announced to the subject under discipline that he might change his position, I entered the very centre of all the vapour. Here some lay stretched on the floor in the most complete state of exhaustion, while others sat with their backs to the wall, awaiting their happy moment

of oblivion: I took my seat among these, in doubt whether to brave the issue, or to fly at once from the caldron. In a very short time, however, I was spell-bound, and had great difficulty to struggle to the outer room, where I lay for some time too languid to attempt to dress. The effect of this apparently weakening ceremony is very delightful indeed. One of its most pleasing sensations is the marble-like smoothness of the skin; there is the consciousness too that among the many impurities of an Eastern city you can bid defiance to them all.

In endeavouring to make an arrangement for my expedition across the desert, I have become as frequent in my attendance at the principal khan, that of Ashad Pasha, as any merchant belonging to it. As this is the chief mart in the city, it is not a bad criterion of the import trade, for here the greatest caravans deliver their goods, and all business with Bagdad and the East is conducted within it. It is an exceedingly fine building of stone; the roof, supported by pillars and arches, consists now of six domes. The three centre ones having been thrown down, it is said, by an earth-

quake, their place is filled by large beams; the floor is covered with bales of goods that have either just arrived, or are packed ready for exportation. All is so characteristic of Eastern manners, that it is worth while to give a little sketch of the scenes by which I have frequently been amused in it. In the centre is a reservoir of water always full, and into which fountains pour continually, while a "jet d'eau" plays in the midst of it, and spreads a refreshing coolness around. There are magazines for goods in the lower part, and in a gallery above that encircles the building. In the front of each store, into which no person is ever permitted to enter that is not connected with it, is a platform where the merchant reclines on his carpet until customers come to interrupt his meditations. Business never begins till near mid-day, the great doors are locked until that hour; and a porter, who is paid by a small tax upon each store, is responsible for the safety of the property within them. The great occupation appears to be smoking; a man stands by the reservoir with a pan of charcoal ready to give light to the numerous pipes around, and

lets out water-pipes to the servants of the merchants, and those loungers who come in for no other purpose than to indulge in them.

The utter apathy of all is striking in a commercial mart. I have visited it at all hours, and never observed the least appearance of activity: the manner of dealing is the most tiresome that can be conceived; a conversation must occupy at least a third of the day before a bargain is struck. The intended purchaser, after wishing peace, jumps up and seats himself by the side of the merchant, who perhaps immediately offers him his pipe. The goods are then displayed, and a price named, that seems without reference to the value of the articles, to be merely thrown out as a challenge to argument. The debate soon grows loud; the greatest anger appears to exist between the parties, and an instant rupture to be about to take place; when "Come nearer" one cries to the other, and they draw as close as possible, and continue some minutes whispering in the most mysterious manner. Suddenly, the Muezzin's call to prayer breaks upon their ears: up they rise, and, shuffling away to the bason, squat on its brink to

perform the necessary ablutions; then, returning to their carpets, pass half an hour in prayer. A stranger to an Eastern city would indeed be confounded, on entering the great exchange, to find all the merchants on their knees, their heads bowed in adoration towards the same point. The ceremony over, they return to their bargains, with clear consciences at any rate on one score. The gravity of the scene is sometimes disturbed by the cries of itinerant bakers, who carry the most excellent bread in trays upon their heads, and dealers in sherbet, who attract notice by clinking their brass cups like cymbals.

There is no end to beggars, who are the most importunate in this city I ever met; they pull the passengers by the skirts or sleeves of their coats, and hold them till by a few coins they purchase a ransom. Occasionally, singing women make a round of the building, screeching opposite each person, till their frightful yells extract something from him. These singers are generally Egyptians, and wear the blue cotton shifts common in that country, with the black handkerchief over their faces. Very

little seems, even in this mart, as in the more humble bazars, to be sufficient to establish a merchant; Hajee Baba might bring his cherry-sticks here, and lay the foundation of a fortune.

The most singular visitors to the khan are the Bedouin Arabs, who flock in in crowds, and stare about as if they had suddenly dropped among animals of another species. As they come here to let their camels out to hire, I have had much dealing with them, and have lost many days in endeavouring to conclude a bargain. The shiekh of the Bagdad caravan refused to take us under his especial protection, in case, as he said, the tax levied by the Anazie tribe should, on our account, be very much increased. A smart little old man, of the name of Hassan, at length agreed to open a treaty upon the subject with us, and day after day did we meet him and argue the matter. His demand in the first instance was so exorbitant, that I despaired of bringing him to reasonable terms.

A most benevolent old man, one of the wealthiest Arab merchants in the city, interested himself greatly for us, and in front of

his store we held our meetings. Through the influence of Mustapha Shellebie, we at length agreed to hire camels, and completed the matter by paying half of the promised sum. Hassan declared that he would not accompany the caravan, but take us by a route the Arabs did not at this season frequent; we were to travel only at night, and our number was to consist of fifteen or twenty.

There was sufficient hope of adventure in the journey to render the prospect of it doubly delightful; and on the eve of departure I called on Sherif Bey to inform him of our plans. He disapproved of them, and begged me to postpone setting out until he had caused inquiry to be made about Hassan; for, said he, "None but an Englishman would have dreamt of such an arrangement, for they seem to think very little of where they go, or in what manner they are accompanied."

We delayed the expedition, and the next evening the Pasha's interpreter came with a long message from him, declaring that Hassan the Bedouin was not trustworthy, and if we went with him, he would not be responsible for

our safety. "Go, however, if you please; you have more concern with your own heads than I have," said the messenger of his Excellency; "but if ever you reach Bagdad, you must be satisfied to enter the city without them." This was great encouragement, and we determined to follow the Pasha's advice.

We went to the khan in the morning, doubtful what excuse to make for requiring a restoration of the earnest-money. Hassan, however, anticipated us, and, tendering the sum he had received, said, "I cannot take you now, there is your money." Without an explanation we parted with this worthy, who had plagued us for a week in effecting the bargain so suddenly broken off. Ibrahim Bey, one of the chiefs of the court, undertook now the further negotiation, and found a Bedouin of so different an aspect to the former, that I was immediately impressed in his favour. Hassan had a sharp face, with a pair of sparkling little black eyes deeply sunk in his head, a scanty grey beard that seemed to have been well pulled, probably in fits of passion, and so contracted an expression, that, now the alarm was given, I fancied villany

and treachery most plainly written in his countenance.

"Abd-ul-Kerim," our new ally, had the most benign smile possible, and the few Arabs about him looked with the greatest affection upon him. We met in the garden of Ibrahim Bey on a marble platform in the midst of a bed of violets, and on the third day concluded the treaty for the same sum of money that we had promised to Hassan, who made his appearance regularly at the meetings, although no one seemed to offer him a welcome. From the first conversation with Abd-ul-Kerim, we had both made up our minds on the subject; but so many absurd difficulties were constantly thrown in the way, that the arrangement was more fatiguing than the journey itself promised to be. We adopted, after a slight struggle, the most prudent plan, and determined to accompany the caravan, whose motions were as uncertain as the sailing of vessels from a mercantile port. From the conclusion of the bargain to the moment of departure, we were plagued with the most absurd stories of the desert; recommendations from one side to go with the

caravan, and warnings from the other to avoid it. Abd-ul-Kerim desired that we should not say a word of our plans to any person, but steal unobserved from the city when the day arrived. His Arabs made a property of our persons, and followed us about as cautiously as if they did not wish their espionage to be discovered.

We were a fortnight in Damascus after the termination of the agreement, cheated with the hope of leaving it every day, and prevented by the uncertainty from making a short excursion in any other direction.

I became after a while less conspicuous in my appearance, for I changed my dress for that of a Turk; and although at first the capacious sack-like trousers were far from comfortable, by a few days' practice I shuffled about the city with tolerable success.

On the top of the convent is a good walk, and an exceedingly fine view of the city; every house has a flat roof round its inner court, which is itself open to the sky: towards the evening the whole town is in a flutter with innumerable flights of pigeons on their return to

roost; men stand in the neighbourhood of the city, whistling the birds in, or, waving white pennants attached to long poles, attract them to alight, which, after many graceful sweeps round the decoy, they accomplish.

It would be an easy matter to run along the tops of the houses through any quarter of the city. If I should be attacked in my own, I should not despair of making an escape, by concealing myself in that of a distant inhabitant, without passing through the streets. From the summit of our house it is scarcely possible to avoid peeping into the court of the adjoining neighbours, where all appear unmasked. The people move about like figures in the bottom of a pit, and the fairest ladies are occupied in the most humble offices.

In a house near the convent, I caught an occasional glimpse of so beautiful a face, that I was tempted to seek its light oftener, perhaps, than would be wise to acknowledge. I thought I had never seen so perfectly lovely a countenance. A grated window, which looked into the centre area of the house, concealed the figure from me, and prevented my seeing in

what occupation so graceful a creature was engaged. As she cast her eyes upwards through the bars—and they were the most expressive eyes in the world,—I was so fascinated, that she must have been duller than Eastern ladies generally are had she not perceived it. It happened, therefore, whenever I walked upon the terrace, that accident brought the beautiful Helena, for that was her name, to the grated window, and I grew impatient to liberate her from what seemed to me a most barbarous imprisonment.

The happy moment at length arrived; I had bought a large bunch of violets in my ramble through the bazar, and, armed with so infallible an interpreter, I appeared at my post; she was busily engaged, but supended her work a while on perceiving me, and, leaning her cheek upon her hand like Juliet, made behind her prison bars the prettiest picture imaginable. A bright instrument was in the left hand, and I thought she might have been passing her seclusion in some elegant embroidery. Now, however, I resolved to tempt her from the window, and kissing my violets threw them over the

wall. She rose, and clattering on a high pair of wooden shoes, came forth, a knife in one hand, and a fish that she had been scraping in the other. My romance was at an end in a moment, and I never could recover gravity enough to return to the terrace. She was exceedingly beautiful, the daughter of a rich merchant, and had, as usual, in her youth been betrothed to a man, who had proved false; he had gone to Alexandria, they supposed, and had never since been heard of. Her unfortunate story, and her beauty, were equally subjects of conversation among her acquaintances: I found, the misfortune, however, was not in the desertion so much as in the necessity of remaining single until the death of her affianced husband should enable her to take another.

CHAPTER IV.

Summoned to the Desert.—My Eastern Dress.—Ostentation in Costume.—Force of Scriptural Expressions.—Preparations for crossing the Desert.—Our Companions.—Method of guiding the Camels.—The Expedition commenced.—An Accident.—Arabian Surgery.—Picturesque Movements.—Our Bivouac.—Journey resumed.—Military order of march.—Arab Women.—Arab Devotion.—A Kurd.—Water-skins.—Ruined Town.—Lovely Scene.—A Ramble.—Number of our Caravan.

APRIL 3rd.—Very soon after daylight this morning I was summoned to the Desert by the wildest-looking Arab I have yet seen. He is to be one of my particular attendants, and was sent to lead me privately to the place of rendezvous. The camels had not arrived at the gate, and I sat in the midst of my baggage in a shed that appears to serve as a custom-house. I flatter myself, as I did not attract the notice of the various passengers, that my dress, which is a mixture of the Turkish and Arabic, is a tolerable disguise. There is a singular ostentation

in the display of new clothes in the East, from some superstitious feeling perhaps, for the ticket is never taken off the turban or the shawl round the waist until their novelty is completely worn away. I allowed the little piece of card attached to mine, therefore, to hang from its thread as an additional ornament, and hope all that observed it may have wished me health to wear out my new turban, for I conceive such a blessing is the object of the exhibition. The gayest Turks in Damascus strut with greater pride when the mark of the shop dangles from their heads. I sometimes observed the corner of a piece of Manchester manufacture spread over the folds of the turban it composed, to show the name of the makers stamped in large blue letters upon it: an English firm is thus converted into a decoration for a Turkish beau, or an emblem of gratitude to Providence—I do not know which. Burkhardt, in his account of the manners of the people of Mecca, says that on every feast-day all are bound to appear in new clothes. Those who cannot afford to buy them, borrow them, rather than neglect the custom. It is not necessary, however, for a traveller to go

out of his way to prove the advantage of wearing a new dress.

Since I have seen so much of the Oriental costume, and have worn it myself, I can more fully understand the force of the expressions that so frequently occur in Scripture, drawn from the nature of the habits worn in the East. No person changes his position without first shaking his raiment; and no man can quit the ground from which he has risen until he has, in the words of Nehemiah, "shook his lap," and thrown out the impurities he could not but have collected from his manner of sitting down. As the slippers are always left at the outer door, it is very common to strike them two or three times on the pavement before putting in the feet, and thus shake off the dust.

Although there is a charm about Damascus that belongs, perhaps, to the remembrance of its history, and the admirable picture of customs in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" which seem realised in it, I was impatient to penetrate the little mystery that exists in the name of the Desert. It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon before the camels made their appearance.

I had been sitting on my saddle-bags for many hours; not without amusement however, for a group of people sitting down is a never-failing attraction to tired travellers, who, without ceremony, join the circle, and if questioned, willingly give an account of themselves. Mules and asses laden with skins of oil passed constantly into the town, and most reverend signiors on white asses ambled out of it.

A party of Christian Arabs from the plain of Haman, leading a string of camels carrying the most superb wheat, stopped a while to smoke in our company. They were fine-looking men, and cultivated a portion of that magnificent soil—the country where Abraham, by many, is supposed to have dwelt before going into Canaan. Captain Cotton, and a very interesting Christian youth from Beirout, converted from the Greek church to Protestantism; Mr. Calmun, by birth a Jew, and now an Independent Christian, I believe; Hassan, a Mahometan, and myself, formed the rather singular mixture for so close an association as we had in prospect. Mohammed, my wild attendant, and Suleiman, an Arab of a very opposite appearance, were at-

tached to our camels. The first was excessively dirty and blunt in his manners, his head closely shaved; while the latter was the gayest and smartest of the tribe: his long love-locks, carefully curled, hung down to his shoulders, and he was at all times in smiles.

I must give a description of our equipage, now that we are fairly launched on the great waste. I ride a white camel, with my saddle-bags under me, and a pair of water-skins quite full beneath them: over the saddle is my bed. In my own figure I am neither a Bedouin, a merchant, nor a Turk, yet something of all. A thick cherry stick, with a cross at the end of it, serves to guide the animal; a gentle tap on the right side of his neck sends him to the left, and one on the opposite makes him turn back again to the right; a knock on the back of his neck stops him, and a few blows between the ears bring him to his knees, if accompanied by a guttural sound resembling, as the Arabs say, the pronunciation of their letter "khe:" to make him move quicker, it is necessary to prick him with the point of the stick on the shoulders. And now I think I am master of his motions.

Hassan, who already sighs for the paradise he has lost, strides across a tent for which I gave fifteen shillings in Damascus; the pole fastened beneath his right foot along the animal's body has most of the cooking-pots hanging to it, which balance the provisions on the other side. Michael, the Christian, sits in the midst of jars and baskets, while his master is equipped much like myself. Mr. Calmun is elevated on a pinnacle formed by his camel's hump, which sticks up between two large wooden boxes; when he loses his seat from this uncomfortable perch, he falls upon one of the boxes, where he remains until he is able to climb up again.

In an hour after our departure we found the Arab sheikh awaiting us, with a few of his own people about him. Thus augmented, we trotted briskly over an extensive plain, having the mountains on the left hand. At eight in the evening, we arrived near the village of Addera, and encamped among a number of camels belonging to the caravan. It was a fine moonlight night, and the scene was full of animation.

We commenced the expedition with an acci-

dent that took some part of the night to endeavour to repair. Mr. Calmun's camel was a little too lively for him, and, setting off at a tremendous pace, jolted him about from its hump to the boxes on each side so roughly, that I thought he would have been shaken to pieces: at length off he pitched; and the animal, freed, galloped away with the most ludicrous capers till it got thoroughly rid of its load. The Arabs laughed very heartily at this little frisk, and would not return to assist the fallen rider. "No one," they all cried, "is ever hurt by falling from a camel;" but the poor missionary had formed a very different opinion, and lay on the ground calling loudly for assistance: our camels, inspired by the same good-humour as his, pulled at such a rate, that we could not stop them, and some minutes had passed before we could render proper help. Mr. Calmun thought that he had broken his arm.

All the idle Arabs of the camp came to the consultation, and had some difficulty to persuade him that his bones were whole. Suleiman undertook to cure the wound in an instant, and digging a hole in the ground, filled it with hot ashes,

and desired the patient to stretch his arm across it; he complied with this advice; when two Arabs pressed and pulled it till it was perfectly straight, then exclaiming "Inshallah!"—in the name of God! suddenly heaped a quantity of hot charcoal upon it, and allowing him to jump up, pronounced it a cure, and if not, offered to repeat the operation: this single specimen of skill, however, seemed satisfactory enough.

April 4th.—We started this morning at a quarter before six, and, in company with a very large train of camels, passed over a plain perfectly level and unbounded, except to the north, where stood the mountains of Anti-Libanus. The land was cultivated in some parts with barley, but generally used for the pasture of the camels. Our movements were exceedingly picturesque; the animals, being allowed to feed as they travel, break into separate parties and various forms, and wander, all tending to the same direction however, in pursuit of herbs. We gathered in numbers as we moved on, and at twelve o'clock, having been out six hours, arrived where a gentle rise in the ground broke the plain; finding many of the caravan already there, we stopped. We

did not pitch our little tents, for fear of attracting the observation of the Bedouins, and sat tired and somewhat disconsolate till evening in the midst of our goods.

At dusk the camp was enlivened by the coming in of the camels that had been out to graze. They approached from all sides, and of their own accord stopped in front of the bales they had carried; they were planted for the night near them, with their backs to the wind. The plain is sprinkled with flowers, the richest of which—the Persian iris—is beautiful and in great plenty. Near us are the remains of a causeway and drains, that speak of better times than those in which we now find them.

April 5th.—As it is necessary to gather together our forces before the long journey over the Desert, we are yet able to make but short marches. We started this morning at a little before six o'clock, and arriving at eight on a pleasant plain, protected to the south-west by a gentle rise in the ground, halted there; a strong wind from that quarter rendering the shelter necessary. To the north, there is a range of bare hills, and at their bases are patches of

green; the black tents of a tribe of Bedouins are pitched, and their cattle enliven the neighbourhood. We passed over a perfect level this morning, strewed with flowers and thick with pasture for the camels, where we are now resting: we have met the principal part of the caravan, that has been waiting the collection of all in this place, the most fertile in food of any round Damascus. It is not usual, as in many parts of the East, for the camels to wind in long strings, one after the other. Our numbers, amounting to fifteen hundred, are scattered over the surface in all directions as far as the eye can trace.

In travelling, the sheikhs, or chiefs of the caravan, attended by the military part of their equipage mounted on dromedaries, move on in advance, while the loaded camels follow at some distance in parallel masses, opening out or changing the form as the grass renders it necessary; they fall so naturally into military figures, that it is difficult to conceive that they do it without direction. We are yet on the borders of the inhabited world, for we have passed several little villages.

From the Arab camp in the neighbourhood, women come to us with milk, and butter, and butter-milk, all exceedingly good. The women are very like in appearance to those of the sea-coast of Syria. I thought that I recognised some of the very people I had met in the camps near Cesaræa. They are terribly dirty in their clothes and persons; their foreheads are stained purple as well as their under-lips; and many have imitations of bracelets dyed on their wrists, and rings in the same manner on their fingers. We have several tents in the caravan; they are pitched so as to permit the camels belonging to each to lie in the intervals, where they are placed in squads for the night. They are by no means agreeable neighbours, for, although they are not able to move from their places, they make a most unpleasant gurgling noise; the bales of the merchants always form the windward defence, for the tents have no sides to them, and but flutter over the goods to keep the sun from their owners.

At the usual hours of prayer, a loud call is heard through the camp, and parties flock to where the muezzin takes his stand: at sun-set,

as the camels draw in from the pasture, all the Arabs are on their knees, in a line of two or three hundred, in two ranks; the priest, like a flugelman in the front, gives the time for bowing their heads and performing the rest of the enjoined ceremonies. As they rise on the signal, sink again to their knees, and press their foreheads to the earth with the utmost devotion, the scene is singularly impressive.

The only person who does not join in the prayers, is a Kurd, who has a few bales and a wife to protect, and who is of so sour an aspect that I doubt whether they would allow him to join. He paid us a visit the first day, with the common freedom of the East, and took a pipe that was preparing for me, and established himself with all possible comfort among us, till he was perceived by Suleiman, who dismissed him unceremoniously enough. He went away in great wrath, and shouted out that he had discovered imposters, and would proclaim among every Bedouin tribe we met, that there were consuls in the camp. The sheikh, I fancy, discovered a method of silencing him, for he gave us no further trouble.

April 6th.—As there are still some camels behind, we have remained in the same place today: we shall be five or six days without meeting with water, and all are busily employed in filling the skins from a reservoir, nearly two hours' walk from our camp. This is provided by a stream that flows from the hills through a regularly-made conduit, originally under a covert way, but now broken in many places, exposing the labour that was bestowed upon it. Close by are the ruins of a considerable town, now called by the Arabs, El Maksura, or the Broken. It stands upon a rising ground, and commands a view of the river of Damascus winding about the plain, and the lake into which it falls glittering in the sun. The tank that receives the little stream is, I should think, thirty yards square, and pours the water into a bason, from which it sets out into a fresh streamlet, and wandering over the land sown with barley, now in ear, joins very probably the Barahdu, which is at no great distance.

All around is rich in flower, such as mignonette, irises, geraniums, lupines, and many other of fragrance as well as beauty. I was so

pleased with the neighbourhood of the ruined city, that I sat the greater part of the day by the banks of the little stream, where, I believe, I might have remained for ever uninterrupted. I had managed to get so completely out of the way, that I found on my return some anxiety had been created in the camp about me; more, I fancy, that a Frank might fall into the hands of the Bedouins, and draw a greater tribute from the caravan, than out of any regard to my safety. The sheikhs are responsible for the loads their camels bear, and the owners of them; and carry them either by their influence, or a graduated tax, through the camps of the marauders, who are ever on the alert for their prize. In the agreement we made with Abd-ul-Kerim, there was a particular stipulation that no demand should ever be made upon us for purchasing a peaceable passage through the territory of a hostile tribe.

Our caravan reaches now to nearly two thousand camels, and I dare say five hundred men. There are many young among the camels, and we are able occasionally to get a bowl of milk, which is very sweet and resembles goats'

milk in its taste. The poor beasts are miserably afflicted with the mange. Every morning before they start, and on coming in in the evening, they are rubbed over with tar to such a degree that they all seem painted black; the moaning and screaming at the time of this operation is frightful. Two of the most diseased were killed this morning; yet they were eaten, and women came from the neighbouring camp to purchase some of the meat.

CHAPTER V.

Flowers in the Desert.—Method of collecting the Camels.—Form of the Camp.—Hare-hunting.—Swallows.—A Feast.—Amount of Ransom.—Our Provisions.—Travelling in the Desert.—Temperature of the weather.—Management of Arab Horses.—Edible Roots in the Desert.—Rate of progress in the Desert.—The Camel-drivers.—My fall.—Its successful consequences.—Migration of Swallows.—Palmyra.—The "Howling Wilderness."—Djebel-el-Sheikh.—Dromedaries.—Aromatic Shrubs.—The Halting-ground.

SUNDAY, April 7th.—At daylight, which is now at five o'clock, we were all on the alert to depart, as we were told, for a very long day's journey. It was nearly six before we got fairly off. The sheikhs, with their dromedary corps, amounting to forty, rode on as usual, and, moving in an extended line, had all the appearance of disciplined skirmishers: we passed over a plain in some parts very stony, but yet rich in pasture. The Arabs carry no food for the camels, but, as I have already described, let them roam in quest of it. As far as can be

seen, the plain is glittering with golden flowers, of which the animals are so fond, and yet we are now completely in the Desert—a wide waste of yellow blossoms. It is a most uncomfortable day; there is a high wind from the south-west, and frequent showers of rain.

When within a short distance of the proposed encamping ground, the sheikh orders his standard to be unfurled, as a signal to the caravan. The camels understand it as well as the Arabs, and increase their rate at every pace towards it. Those that may be a long way off in pursuit of food, perceive the sensation, if they do not see the flag, and immediately trot with their heads high up in the air to the centre, and then go in the most direct manner to the ground on which the standard is at length pitched. The form of the camp is circular, each leader taking up his position from that of the chief.

We have seen a great number of hares, and had many hot pursuits after them. The Arabs chase them on foot, and, throwing their short sticks at them with great precision, sometimes knock them down. A poor little hare throws five hundred men into the greatest animation;

those who are mounted even, jump off their camels and endeavour to intercept it. I have seen a hare however escape, after having run the gauntlet through the whole caravan. Several swallows have followed us from Damascus; they fly close to the heads of the camels, and round about them, as sea birds do by ships: they disappear when we are at rest, but at daylight commence the day's journey with us.

April 8th.—We are obliged to halt this day, and have learnt the cause of the short march of yesterday—a very fine grey mare belonging to the sheikh foaled during the night. He gave a feast in celebration of the birth to the principal people of a camp of the great tribe of Anazie, now in our neighbourhood. A camel was killed, and divided among those of our own party. It was pretended that the Anazie Arabs would demand a very high tax if they discovered that Franks were in the caravan, and a message was sent to beg us not to expose our faces: we were not much disposed to exhibit ourselves, for it was a rainy day; and, although it was known well enough I suspect, we did not care to run any risk. Suleiman assured us that we

should each be estimated at sixteen thousand piastres,—about two hundred pounds sterling; rather a high sum for the little use, if they bought us, they could turn us to.

The festival has created some merriment in the camp; fires are blazing all round, and knots are seated in different quarters, smoking, cooking, or eating. Very little food is carried by the Arabs, and we are scarcely more luxurious in our provision; I should think meal, coffee, and tobacco, with a small quantity of rice, made up the supply of the richest: in addition to those articles we have a few fowls. As we have commenced by killing two a day however, the twelve we set out with are nearly at an end, and then, with the exception of the finest olives in the world, we shall be on a par with the meanest; so on the score of housekeeping we have nothing to plague us. My friend Mohammed, a Bedouin of our party, who has attached himself to me, will not suffer me to starve, for I never approach him that he does not, with more generosity than delicacy, draw from the bosom of his dirty shirt an offering of bread, which I do not generally refuse.

There is nothing, after all, appalling in the Desert but the name. In two or three days the fatigue from the camel's motion passes away; and reposing then on a Persian carpet spread over a lawn of flowers, with rice and milk, or fresh baked cakes, before me, where is the hardship, and what is the privation? At this season of the year, it is pleasanter than at any other period; however, three months earlier it was covered with snow, and three months hence it will be scorched and withered. The Arabs declare that in the past winter there was no break in the snow that lay for more than a month on the plain, as far as they could see from any one point.

The nights are now very cold; I am obliged to cover myself up with every cloak I have. The mornings are pleasant before the sun rises, but, unless a south-west wind blows, it soon becomes exceedingly warm; and, as our course is nearly due east, we feel the effects of the sun still more in the earlier part of the day.

April 9th.—We travelled this day eleven hours and a half over an exceedingly stony and uneven ground, yet in its general character a plain of

uninterrupted extent. There is nothing interesting in such a scene beyond the appearance of the caravan itself; and all belonging to it seemed to sleep throughout the day, covered up in their cloaks to protect them from the sun. I envied the Arabs the ease with which they were able in this manner to pass away the tedious journey. They can lie in the most comfortable attitudes on the backs of their camels: some hung over them like sacks, and others lounged upon the bales, or leant their backs against jars of oil that stood upright behind the animal's hump, as if they had been in arm-chairs. I can judge of my own appearance by those equally unused to the motion as myself, who vibrated backward and forward so incessantly, that it made me giddy to look at them. The wife of the Kurdish traveller, from being covered in a red silk veil, is the most conspicuous of the party. During the whole of the day she did not once remove her drapery, and nodded upon her hump like the image of a mandarin.

The foal, although but a day old, followed its dam the whole way, without the least suffering. It is not surprising that the Arab horses are so

hardy, when from the day of their birth they commence the most arduous journeys. This little creature must have accomplished thirty-five miles at the least over a very rocky road. The instant it was born, a charm was tied round its neck in a bag of black cloth: sometimes in this sort of manner is placed the pedigree, a matter of greater consequence to an Arab, I fancy, than even the amulet. The best horses are bred in this Desert by the Anazie Arabs, in whose territory, before the conquest of the Wahabees, the district of Nejid was included, where the richest pasture of Arabia is found. That name, in India, used to procure a high price, at all times, for a horse.

I am amused at the recollection of the sudden change in the habits of the Arab horses when they come into the possession of English masters, by whom they are pampered and petted. They rarely, I think, arrive in the East before they are six years old; and fall suddenly into a life the most opposite to that they lead on their own wide plains, where they are seldom fed on corn, and travel fifty or sixty miles a day without a drop of water. There are several horses in our

caravan, that are occasionally allowed to graze, for a short time while their riders take a nap on the grass beside them. They are secured by tying the rope of the halter to the hind leg, loose enough to prevent any restraint till they show an inclination for a frisk.

We met several gazelles, but failed to catch them. Among the vegetables of this day's journey is a root resembling a truffle, which created more animation than either the hares or the antelopes: it is a serious affair to miss them, for they make, I find, one of the chief articles of food: they are in great plenty, however; the earth is a little broken, and raised above them. The Arabs descry this appearance from a long distance, and jumping off their camels, race towards the spots, and with their sticks dig up the roots. They are sometimes larger than good-sized potatoes, and, burnt in the ashes, are exceedingly nice. My friend Mohammed hunts for me and himself too, and has promised to give me a handful every day. He brought me this afternoon one finely roasted, upon his usual donation of bread.

April 10th.—This morning we passed over a

similar tract to that of yesterday, and were in motion ten hours and three quarters. The rate at which a loaded camel travels is estimated at two miles and a half an hour by almost every traveller. Our caravan has not, I think, exceeded this, but the variety of its movements has been very tiresome. The Arab drivers, who walk in front of the animals, never miss an opportunity of a piece of pasture; but however distant it may be from the proper course, lead them towards it, and with the short sticks they carry, beat them into the thickest part of it. The camels are anxious enough for the matter themselves, and huddle so together that their riders' legs are in tolerable danger of being crushed in the contact. There is so strong a resemblance to a voyage at sea in the passage across the Desert, that I cannot divest myself of the belief that the moving mass is but a collection of small vessels carried into a heap by the tide. Every man is ready with his stick to fend off the animal that approaches his: one push separates them as it would do a couple of boats; they move away quite unconscious of the circumstance, till another moment swings them together again.

The drivers are the poorest and lowest of the tribe, and exercise the sticks they carry with very little ceremony. For example: I was in the act of drinking water with the flask applied to my lips, when my camel receiving a blow for going where he should not, turned suddenly round, and I came in a sitting posture to the ground, amid the laughter of the whole of my part of the caravan. I contrived to bear the fall, and, without having moved my flask, continued to drink. I received an Arab cheer for this feat, and when I had remounted, several came to congratulate me on the ingenious manner of my fall. One Arab, who had travelled a great deal in Syria, and had seen many Franks, assured me that I was more fit to be an Arab than any he had ever met, for Franks were all excessively awkward and disconcerted when they fell. I do not mean either to take much merit to myself for this act of agility, or to recommend it to the practice of travellers; but it has positively gained me more good-will from my wild companions than the most sedate demeanour could have done.

The swallows are still with us; they may

probably be on their passage to a warmer climate, although late in their emigration, if they passed the winter in Syria; yet this who can tell? I have looked every morning with as much anxiety for their appearance as, after a long voyage, I should do for any indication of land. In the Desert, as at sea, there is fellowship in every living thing. Notwithstanding that we have passed the whole day out, we have not found it the least warm; a strong wind from the south-west, that has blown without intermission since we left Damascus, has rendered it necessary to keep our cloaks on at all hours.

We are this day fifty miles from Palmyra, and are not able to visit so celebrated a place; the Aguel Arabs are not on friendly terms with those of Tadmor, and the caravan will not go nearer to it. Without a most exorbitant sum we should not succeed in drawing any of our people from it, and even then they would travel without stopping until they should overtake it again; it is therefore absolutely necessary to abandon the project. Although it is now impossible to see those magnificent re-

mains, it is not difficult to imagine their solemnity and grandeur, while in the midst of the same wilderness as that in which they stand. How often, while the bleak wind I have mentioned is moaning over the dreary waste, particularly in the depth of the night, have I thought of the beauty and justice of the expression of the "howling wilderness."

Djebel-el-Sheikh, the high point of the chain of Anti-Libanus is in sight, having exactly the appearance that Mount Ætna has from the sea, before any portion of the island can be seen; the mountains are distant about a hundred miles.

The Arab sheikhs, who ride on in advance, go about five miles an hour on the lighter description of camels, such as are by Europeans generally called dromedaries, although they are not different from the animals used for burthen, except in being lighter: they seem, in the estimation of the Arabs themselves, to have the same relation to the heavier camels, that thorough-bred horses have in England to those used for draught, and great care is bestowed in preserving their breed. Their chief pecu-

liarities are in their heads, which are exceedingly small, and in the proportionate length of body, which, for the little difference there is in the height of the two breeds, is very short in the "hadjin," the name given to these saddle camels, from their being used by pilgrims on the "hadj," or pilgrimage: as they go at double the rate of the caravan, the sheikhs generally stop among the first pasture they meet when they have ridden out of sight, and, after having drunk a cup of coffee each, go to sleep until they are overtaken by the slow body; their camels graze around them or lie quietly by their sides.

I have been able sometimes to snatch the same sort of hasty rest. I know no greater comfort than to stretch in this manner on the sandy earth, with the head sheltered beneath one of the low aromatic shrubs, of which there are on all hands such numbers. The lowest plant is sufficient to defend you against the strongest wind, if you lie flat on the ground. There are none indeed to be seen higher than large rose-bushes, excepting the prickly shrub which is used for firewood, "el sheeakh," and

which at this season has no leaves upon it. This plant is scattered in large patches all over the Desert, and is known from a long distance by the contrast of its bluish grey colour to the green and yellow near it. Wherever it is found in plenty, is chosen the halting-ground, and before the caravan reaches it, parties spread about to cut their fuel.

CHAPTER VI.

Journey resumed.—Birds.—A Jerboa.—Lizards.—Flowers.—An Alarm.—A Parley.—Peaceable Issue.—Effect of Ibrahim Pasha's name.—His prompt measures.—Character of the Bedouins.—Population of the Anazie Tribe—Their conduct to their Captives.—Independence of the Arab Life.—Method of replenishing the water-skins.—Endurance of the Camels in travelling without water.—A forlorn Kurdish Woman.—Change of Climate.—Locusts in flight.—A Mirage.—Morning Summons.—Camp Fire.—Well in the Desert.—A Band of Arabs.—Purchase of Camels.—Patriarchal Customs.—End of our day's labour.

April 12.—YESTERDAY'S journey was longer than the one of the former day,—eleven hours and a half: it was nearly sunset when we arrived at our resting-place; we lost sight of Djebel-el-Sheikh, and our view was bounded only by the horizon. This morning we set off at daylight, and plodded on for twelve long hours over a wide and unbroken level: we met more living things, however, than we have yet encountered: besides our constant attendants the

swallows, we put up several flocks of rock pigeons, some vultures, storks, and a few larks, with a great many hares, not one of which was caught. One jerboa was killed by an Arab, and brought to us,—the first that we have yet found, although they are very numerous in this Desert; it has an exceedingly soft and rich fur.

The ground is teeming with lizards; the sun seems to draw them from the earth, for sometimes, when I have fixed my eye on one spot, I have fancied that the sands were getting into life, so many of these creatures at once have crept from their holes. A greater variety of flowers covered the plain than we have met with yet; and a plant that I think resembles rhubarb, a thick stem with a very broad leaf, was abundant. We have seen it to-day for the first time: some few of the Arabs eat of the stem, but it appeared to me more from curiosity than from being accustomed to do so. The plain is moreover ornamented by poppies of many colours, irises, lupines, mignonette, a very small species of basil (ocymum), and the lark-spur, which grows over the plain in every direction as thickly as blue-bells in a meadow.

Soon after the period for prayer, "el Aszer," which takes place two hours before sunset, we were thrown into some confusion by the arrival of an aide-de-camp from the sheikhs, to desire us to keep all together, for the Arabs were in sight. The most regular of the caravan had just finished their prayers, which they never neglect at the hour I have mentioned, and they set off in all directions to drive the camels towards the centre. The animals seemed to comprehend the cause of the uproar, and came running into their places. The merchants, who were very few, endeavoured to keep their bales together, and placed themselves in the midst of them.

We were now in several parallel masses, each line containing three or four; every man braced on his sword, and, loading his matchlock, prepared for an attack. We could as yet see nothing, but moved slowly on in this compact order till we reached the ground where the sheikhs had halted. The chief of each set of camels then placed himself at its head, while some were sent to the rear as a guard, and others ordered to protect the flanks. The sheikh of

the caravan himself, with his standard-bearer and a few of his own followers about him, remained in front of the centre.

I was crowded among boxes and bales in the first disposition, but made my way at last to a more honourable post, and looked in vain through a telescope for the enemy. They were not yet visible; but the sheikh had received intelligence from a scout who usually precedes the whole body on foot, and, without being perceived himself, is able to see to a great distance. He either lies down until the arrival of the armed escort, or returns to give information, as the circumstance may require. When everything was in order, the matches lighted, and some swords even drawn, we moved on, and in half an hour came within sight of a large camp, and halted. Many camels were grazing about; but so great a stillness reigned among the tents, that they appeared to have been deserted.

The standard of our party was now unfurled, a tri-colour of blue, white, and green stripes; and in the same military manner we went forwards. When within a short distance, we halted once more, and in a few minutes an Arab

mounted on a grey mare, and armed with matchlock and spear, rode towards us; when halfway, he stood with his spear sloped on his shoulder, to indicate a desire for a parley; one of our dromedary train was sent to meet him, and the standard of the Aguels being raised on high, we waited the issue: it was peaceable, and, retaining our fighting order, we marched on, every one, I think, very well satisfied at the result.

I had great misgivings on the subject; the warlike tribe we had fallen in with might have overthrown us as lions would have done a flock of sheep. Although the Aguels who convey the caravans are bound to die in behalf of their charge, as they are ready at all times to do, the merchants have very little intention of joining them: we should, I think, have been most certainly the prisoners of the Anazies; but they themselves were under some alarm at our appearance. They took the caravan for an advance to Ibrahim Pasha's army, that they heard was on its route through the Desert to Bagdad, for there is no place where rumour does not find its way.

The name of the Egyptian conqueror has spread terror even among the Bedouins; he has declared that he will yet subdue them, and when in Damascus gave a proof of his sincerity. When the men of a tribe that had given some offence were absent, perhaps on a forage, he sent a party to capture the women and children, and ordered them to be sold in the slave-market. The most effectual way of breaking the spirit and independence of the sons of Ishmael would be to seize their children, and have them taught in the cities, although I doubt whether the Turks would think of this latter plan of rendering them tractable.

If the Bedouins, however, be an evil, they are, I think, a most necessary one; the Desert can never be peopled but by roving tribes, and without them the most useful animals in this part of the world would be lost; for men brought up in towns could never attend to the breed of camels, or the transport of goods from the richest quarter of the globe. As it is not fair to judge of the Arabs by the rules of civilized life, they should not be so generally condemned for their marauding propensities as they some-

times are. They possess many amiable qualities,—hospitality in the highest degree, and generosity, and a sense of honour that is rarely to be met with in enlightened countries. It seems a sort of right in them to levy taxes upon all that pass through their territories; and I would as soon think of refusing the dues at a custom-house, as of resisting the payment of a reasonable demand from them.

We have encamped at no great distance from the Anazie party. Their faith has been given, and we are all now in perfect ease in their neighbourhood. A brother of Abd-ul-Kerim comes sometimes to visit us in the evening, and take coffee. The Anazies have given us a subject of conversation on this occasion: he says that the population of that tribe is one million; that they are richer and more powerful than any, even to the shores of the Persian Gulf; that the whole space between the Haman and the Euphrates nearly, belongs to them, and their boundary on the side of Arabia is close to Nedjid. They command the route of the Bagdad caravan to and from Damascus, and the Syrian one of pilgrimage to Mecca, from

each of which they receive tribute. This is the tribe classed by Niebuhr as having sprung from the Jews of Kheibar; and in their name of Anazie, or Anaesse, he discovers the Hebrew, Hanassi.

In the conversations that I have had with the Arabs of the caravan on the subject of robbery, they all declare that every body of plunderers is anxious to avoid putting to death those they seize, and that nothing but an absurd resistance will induce them to do so; their object is always gain, and they will get more by a ransom. They treat their prisoners well; but sometimes, if they apprehend an attempt at escape, bury them standing in the ground up to their chins, and spreads their carpets to sleep on each side. As this narration was given with a laugh, I dare say my visitor may have meant it as a joke, for I never heard of such a scheme being adopted by Arabs; it would be idle to endeavour to escape from the midst of the Desert, for where could the prisoner go?

I am so pleased with the independence of the Arab life, that I think I could submit with good grace to such a lot for a few months.

When the Desert ceased to be, as it now seems, a garden, I should probably change my mind; but at this moment the mildness of the climate, the immense extent, the richness and fragrance of the plain, render the life I lead most delightful. I was obliged this evening to pluck up a large bed of mint before I was able to spread my carpet, the odour being too strong when pressed by my weight; it is like the most powerful essence of peppermint, and is in very great quantity around.

April 13.—When we had been out five hours this morning, we arrived suddenly on the edge of a very extensive hollow, where rain-water has lodged for several weeks; and, forbidding as it appears, we have halted to fill the empty skins. To do this, it is necessary to lay them on the ground and scoop the water in with the hands; it is as dirty, therefore, as it can possibly be. This is the seventh day that we have passed without finding water. The Arabs that we met yesterday had merely halted on that spot for a day or two, and were to move on this morning to a more distant quarter; they were on one of their periodical migrations, and were,

like ourselves, limited to the contents of their skins.

I was surprised to observe that none of the camels, when turned out to graze, showed the least desire to visit the little lake. They were all driven in an opposite direction certainly; but, as the watery tract was so large, they might have been tempted by the sight of it to stray. Since we left Damascus, not one drop of water has been given to them; now ten days. In the spring of the year, while the succulent vegetables on which they feed are so plentiful, it is not usual to suffer them to drink, and they will arrive at the Euphrates without moistening their lips, except with the morning dew. This is the only season in which the caravan crosses this part of the Desert, the most destitute of water; in the hot months of the year, they go in a direct route from the river Euphrates to Tadmor, and usually accomplish the journey in nine days, finding wells on the road at no great intervals apart.

It is very common for travellers to differ in respect to the power of the camel to support a privation from water. The variety of opinions

arise very much, I am inclined to think, from the different seasons of the year at which they have been formed. In the midst of summer, camels require water every third or fourth day. Could the spring last for ever, they would scarcely need to drink at all. A camel, like any other animal, is trained to a greater or less abstinence. As the horses of the Turcomans are practised to work for several days without being watered, so from a similar custom are the camels of the Arabs. In the fertile plains of India, on the contrary, they are made to drink every day, and could go no great distance without doing so. I have just been refreshed by a tumbler of the rain-water, and, after I had scooped the sand from it with a spoon, found it very agreeable.

A long way from us to the north, is a small hill, called "Djebel-el-Orab,—the Mountain of Ravens;" all besides is level. In roaming round the Desert lake, I found a poor Kurdish woman sitting alone among the shrubs on its borders, with tears in her eyes. She is the most forlorn being that can be imagined. Sympathy with a sorrowing fair one would not be

according to Eastern etiquette; so I could not venture to ask the cause, although, indeed, I should have found a greater obstacle in the way of my curiosity, in my ignorance of her language. If she be really unhappy, poor creature, her misery must be now at its height; for although I have praised the Desert, and the independent life within it, it requires an elastic spirit to appreciate it—a sad one must make a desert of it indeed. The Kurd, her husband, has a few bales which are placed in a circle very little larger than a swan's nest; a red shawl, instead of a tent, flutters above it, and in the midst sit the old birds themselves. No one ventures near them.

April 14.—The climate has changed considerably: it has been really hot to-day. The swallows have left us, and the ground is covered with locusts of a golden colour, which rise on the wing only as the camels approach them; they soon sink again: as they flutter in the sun before us, they appear like Canary birds. This Desert is, I fancy, the birth-place of these insects; and probably, as long as they find food in it, they do not fly in clouds to

destroy more fertile lands. They are at this moment very heavy and lazy.

There is a singular observation in Niebuhr: talking of nests of locusts that he had seen near Mousul, he suggests, that with a careful police, they might in a great measure be destroyed. The whole Desert now is pregnant with them; and unless the Arabs, who sometimes feed upon them, anticipate the period of their flight, and be the first to prey, I fear they are not likely to be diminished.

There has been no wind this day: in the morning it was close, with a light vapour hanging over the plain, in the midst of which the Hill of Ravens vanished from the sight as an island does at sea. About noon the most perfect deception that can be conceived exhilarated our spirits, and promised an early resting-place. We had observed a slight mirage two or three times before, but this day it surpassed all I have ever fancied. Although aware that these appearances have often led people astray, I could not bring myself to believe that this was unreal. The Arabs were doubtful, and said that, as we had found water yesterday, it was not impro-

bable that we should find some to-day. The seeming lake was broken in several parts by little islands of sand, that gave strength to the delusion. The dromedaries of the sheikhs at length reached its borders, and appeared to us to have commenced to ford, as they advanced and became more surrounded by the vapour. I thought they had got into deep water, and moved with greater caution. In passing over the sand-banks, their figures were reflected in the water. So convinced was Mr. Calmun of its reality, that he dismounted and walked towards the deepest part of it, which was on the right hand. He followed the deceitful lake for a long time, and to our sight was strolling on its bank, his shadow stretching to a great length beyond. There was not a breath of wind; it was a sultry day, and such a one as would have added dreadfully to the disappointment if we had been any time without water.

I had much difficulty to keep my water-skins from the Arabs, who seemed to think them fair plunder; as they are hung under my saddle-bags, I could not watch them very closely. If I nodded in my seat, the thirsty thieves stole

quietly up to the skins, and opening drank as much as they could, and closed them up again. A sort of warfare continued the whole day through the caravan, between those who carried water, and those who felt inclined to drink it. I have a leather bottle that hangs by a chain from a hook that I stick into some part of my camel's pad; it contains a little more than a gallon; whenever I apply it to my lips, I have fifty petitions for a draught. At first I gave it willingly enough, but such heavy contributions were exacted from it, that I have of necessity grown more selfish, and when I wish to quench my thirst, drop behind, and steal a drink unnoticed. In eleven hours and a quarter we finished this day's journey, and have encamped upon a perfect level.

April 15.—A short time before daylight every morning, Suleiman awakes me in rather an unceremonious manner, though becoming enough in a Desert valet. "Wullah! turn up," is his usual mode of address: to ensure attention to which, he pulls me roughly by the legs, or gives me a thrust in the side with his stick; and if that does not answer, draws my pillow from

under my head, and walks away with it. On rising, there is no toilette to delay me. I must be satisfied with the morning dew for my ablutions, and the great Desert itself for my dressing-room. We are able to make a hasty breakfast, while the camels are being loaded, at a fire in which all the fuel in the camp is collected for a farewell blaze, for it is yet cold enough at daylight to render such a plan agreeable; every Arab, on approaching, brings an offering of wood to increase the flame. My kettle is boiled in a few minutes; a cup of tea, a bowl of camel's milk, and a cake of barley, enable us to support a fast until the evening; we then mount and set off, or sometimes walk for an hour or two. Hassan and Michael have supplied themselves in a truly Eastern taste; the first has an inexhaustible store of dates, and the other a wallet full of almonds, raisins, and figs. Our dinners are now reduced to boiled rice, sweetened with a celebrated paste of apricots made in Damascus, and sold in flat sheets so large that they might be spread out as carpets.

In seven hours' journey we reached a well in

the midst of a wide extent of flowers; it was regularly built of stone; the water was at least fifty feet from the surface, there was not much therefore drawn from it, it was too tedious an operation. The edges of the top stones were completely smooth, with many deep furrows in them from the friction of the ropes. Although a convenient spot for resting in, we were hastened forward by the tidings of another party of the Anazie Arabs being close at hand; they were in motion, and two or three mounted on dromedaries appeared on the horizon, from which they rose as vessels do at sea when first descried from the shore. We were collected together as before, the matchlocks and swords prepared, and the skirmishers sent off to their posts: if we had remained, we should have had a battle for the well, it was said; and I suspect we should not only have lost the water, but been well beaten into the bargain; our chief therefore adopted the most prudent course.

A stronger body of the guard was sent to the side from which the Arabs approached, and a short parley as before took place; we very soon mingled with the main body, and, although they

had given assurance of peaceful intention, not one of our camels was permitted to stray in the least from the mass. The armed escort surrounded the caravan completely, while the drivers shouted with the utmost of their power to direct the movement. The women of the tribe kept at a short distance; they were generally sitting in a species of cradle, swinging on each side of the camel, which is called by the Arabs "Mohaffa:" the men drove the cattle. Among them were several very fine horses, and camels innumerable, two of which an old man brought to our sheikhs for sale; one was three years old, exceedingly fat, and covered over with the closest and cleanest hair I have seen. After a great deal of conversation, the price was arranged at two hundred and seventy piastres; and she, for it was a female, was joined to our party.

Some of the men carried their sons upon the camels with them. A most patriarchal-looking sheikh had one behind, and two balancing each other in saddle-bags at his sides, their little dark heads peeping out of the sacks. Such a scene carries the imagination into the remotest ages.

The days of Abraham naturally recur to the mind; for in this manner, and over this very ground probably, did the patriarch lead all the substance that he had gathered at Haran into the land of Canaan.

A stony defile succeeded to the plain we had left, through which we were two hours winding; and it was just sunset when we finished the day's labour, for we have been out more than twelve hours.

CHAPTER VII.

Steering in the Desert.—River-wells.—A Camel killed for food.—A young Gazelle.—A stony Defile.—Loss of my Cherry-stick.—Beautiful Valley.—Thistles.—Onions.—Travelling on Camels.—District of Hauran.—The Kurdish Woman among the Tombs.—A furious Dispute.—Frequent use of the name of Allah and of the Prophet.—Religious feeling of Mahometans.—A Hyæna killed.—Bustards.—A weary day.—Jerboas.—Watch-towers.—Hawking in the East.—Bedouins of the Caravan—Their hard work and poor fare.—Arrival at a village.—Salt-pits.—Scene of confusion.—First view of the Euphrates.—Rush of Camels to the Water.—Works of Salt and Bitumen.—City of Hit.—Aqueducts.—Method of raising Water.

April 16.—The precision with which the Arabs make a particular point is very remarkable to a novice. There is nothing on the wide plain to fix the observation as a land-mark. The heavenly bodies by day are no guides, and they positively do not use the compass. It seems to me astonishing that so minute an object as the well of yesterday, which they named "Siddim," should have fallen so exactly as they meant it to have done.

This day we have made a shorter journey. In eight hours we arrived at the dry bed of a river, and found three wells dug in the midst of it, with the remains of several others partly choked up. The water is remarkably good; but although they have thrown away that of the 13th, they have not thought it necessary to clean the skins: we have the clear water of to-day with the sediment of the last.

On the opposite side is a rocky ridge which varies the scene very agreeably. I observed one camel rush towards the well, and endeavour to drink, but he was driven away again without a drop. This is the only instance in thirteen days that I have noticed of such an inclination. The Arabs call this place "Suwab-el-Beer,"—the Fountain of Truth.

The young camel that was purchased yesterday was destined to be eaten. Soon after the camp was formed, a party collected round him; one hamstrung him with a cut from his sword, —a most unnecessary piece of cruelty, for the animal showed no desire to escape; he sunk to his knees upon this, when another man seized his head and bent it backwards on his left side,

exposing his breast, into which a third plunged a sword up to the hilt. The blood, gushing out, covered him completely. The camel died instantly, and in less than an hour was wholly eaten. I gave my assistance to the latter part of the operation, and found the flesh very well flavoured. Before it was cooked, it had an exceedingly coarse and red appearance, but was black enough afterwards, for we had no other means of dressing it than by laying it in the ashes among the truffles, which were to-day in great plenty.

A great number of gazelles are about us. I found a young thing of a week old, and have given it to an Arab boy to nurse for me. He brought it to show me the care he was taking of it, with his mouth full of milk, and his lips pouted out to a point, from which the kid was sucking as happily as possible. I hope by this ingenious discovery to introduce my Desert pet to a more civilized life.

April 17.—We have been out twelve hours and a half to-day. The first part of the journey was passed over a plain from which we entered a stony defile of considerable extent, and wound

through it by different paths, occasionally joining and breaking off again from the main route, with much picturesque effect. At the end of the long day, the foal was so lively that it kept the Arab who has the care of it a long time endeavouring to catch it. The mare, too, has not shown the slightest fatigue.

I have found a second gazelle to-day, and, as it is larger, I mean to undertake the care of it myself. I lost my cherry-stick in the course of the morning; when I dismounted for a short time from my camel to stretch myself on the sand, some passing Arab picked it up: I felt as if I had been deprived of an arm. I could not steer my vessel without the tiller, and begged that the loss might be mentioned through the camp. When the faithful were arranged in a long line at prayers, a loud voice exclaimed repeatedly, "In the name of the Prophet, who has picked up a stick?" and continued at intervals to ask the same important question till late at night. Notwithstanding the sacred invocation, my stick was not to be restored; no one cared enough for Mohammed to answer the question. I did not understand the meaning of

the cry when I first heard it; and, going on purpose to have it explained by the crier, was not a little amused when I found my stick was the subject of the prophet's peculiar care.

April 18.—We passed over a hilly and rocky district, divided by narrow valleys through which we filed in close bodies; and, breaking into single or at the most double lines of camels, went slowly down the passes that confined them. Had the scene been wooded, it would have been exceedingly pretty; the vales were green and plentifully strewed with flowers. I walked in the morning in front of the caravan, and sat till it reached me by the entrance to the first defile, where the ground was covered with a beautiful description of thistle growing to a great height. The head as well as the leaves are of a golden colour, crisp and prickly. As if they had suddenly recognised a favourite food, the camels rushed forward, and munched the thistles in spite of the strong thorns they bore. I have seen before a delicate plant of the same species, that seems to be full-grown when no higher than a primrose, and bears one little flower about the size of a pea.

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It would be easy at this season of the year to mark our progress by the plants we meet, for every day produces some new race. The Arabs, I fancy, are in some measure able to do this. In addition to truffles, the Arabic name for which is "Gimme," we picked up a number of onions in the course of the morning, small, but of a good flavour.

We were out twelve hours and forty minutes. Although very warm, I do not feel any extraordinary fatigue. I am inclined to think that a camel is an easier animal for a long expedition than a horse. I am able occasionally, though with no great security, to take a short nap; and, to keep off the sun, follow the Arab plan of covering my head with the abbas, or camel's-hair cloak, and my face with the twilled shawl, or keffie, the invariable dress of the Desert. This shawl is the fabric of Damascus or Bagdad, and is worn carelessly thrown over the head, the points hanging considerably below the shoulders. The colours are always yellow and crimson; it is so thick that the back of the neck and head is completely protected by it. The sides drawn across the face, and tucked into the

folds of the camel's-hair turban or cord that binds the brow, prevents the possibility of its suffering from the rays of the sun, which, reflected from the hot plain, would otherwise raise blisters even on the Arab skin. In the heat of the day, the glare, which this covering likewise prevents, would be more distressing and injurious to the eyes. We encamped in an uninterrupted plain.

April 19.—In four hours after we set out, we entered a valley among rocky hills, and continuing for an hour and a half longer to wind through it, raised the standard of Aguel near the dry channel of a torrent, where the Arabs scooped in the sand, and found water about three feet below the surface. This station is called Hauran; the camp is pitched in a narrow strip close to an old burial-ground. On the right of the torrent is a ruined khan, and some singularly-shaped rocks that will impress the spot on my memory. The caravan from Aleppo to Bussorah generally rests here; it is three days' journey from the Euphrates, and was probably one of the line of villages that is to be traced to a certain distance into the Desert from

the river, where the trading and agricultural Arabs settled to carry on a commerce with their more independent brethren. The size of the grave-yard shows that it has been of some extent. Hauran is a name given to the whole district, of which this station is probably the centre; and even this insignificant spot has been claimed by some as the Haran of Scripture.

Very little serves to give interest in the Desert; a few Arab gravestones therefore have been great attractions to me. There is no inscription upon them: the poor Kurdish woman seemed delighted at the opportunity of ruminating in such a spot, and perched herself "in doleful dumps" upon one on the least conspicuous side, where she sat all the day long. A woman in the East is by herself indeed when divided from her own sex; this poor creature seeks a retired nook every day, when we finish the journey before sunset, where she can sit and meditate alone. Her thoughts might be worth knowing; if she were of a gay disposition at home, she is undergoing a most severe penance now: women, however, have a natural turn for tombstones in the East. In Damascus

she would probably be enjoying herself among the dead as she is doing here.

My savage friend Mohammed, now that we are approaching the world again, has increased his attentions to me; he has this day made a formal proposal of his services to India. I had a specimen of his temper in the morning however, that, if he were really sincere, would scarcely induce me to humour him. He had a very slight dispute with a sedate-looking man of the same class as himself, and abused him in good Arabic metaphor. All those who heard, endeavoured to pacify him, without success. At length he drew his sword, and, leaping from his camel, flew like a maniac at the offender. Every Arab was on foot in a moment; some seized Mohammed, and others secured his antagonist, whose passion being also roused, made a furious struggle. They were both disarmed at length; and peace, excepting as far as their tongues were concerned, was restored.

The Arabs use the name of Allah and Mohammed fully as much as the Turks do "Wullah" and "Yullah." When used with a proper intonation, they seem to be the keys to

Arabic conversation. When my face is muffled up, and I am accosted on the road by the strangers of the camp, I contrive by a prudent use of these words, if we ever reach beyond the form of salutation, to keep them talking to me for some time; and I fancy they go away without discovering my ignorance, giving me credit perhaps for a very commendable taciturnity. If a camel commit any unusual frolic, he is rebuked by the cry of "Allah rahhim," or called back again to his place with "Inshallah" —May it please God!

The frequent prayers, and the constant ejaculation of the name of the Deity, do not seem in the slightest degree to diminish the veneration for them. It is not the least singular part of Mahometanism, that in all moods and situations its disciples attend to the enjoined ceremonies with as cheerful a spirit as if they arose from the spontaneous feelings of their own hearts. The Christian establishments of the East, show sometimes a striking contrast in their manner of slurring over the forms that by constant repetition have at length become irksome. The most interesting period of prayer

is El Aszur, generally two hours before sunset; they occur consequently when on the march: the Arabs leave their camels, and, hastening to the front, kneel, as I have already described, in two ranks, with their faces turned towards Mecca. I have observed some men use the sand as a substitute for water in their necessary ablutions. Although this custom is not invariable as a preparation for prayer, it is sufficiently common.

April 20.—We were five hours in winding through the defiles of Hauran. We then passed over a wide plain richly spread with flowers, chased gazelles and hares, and after a long run killed a hyæna with sticks. There were a number of birds; among them, the bustard in great plenty, called by the Arabs, "Hybarra:" their eggs were scattered over the sand. In twelve hours and three-quarters we reached a hollow, well supplied with fuel, and encamped within it. We are amused every day with a mirage, but no deception has been yet so complete as that I have already noticed.

April 21.—We have this day made the longest journey that we have yet accomplished at

one time,—fourteen hours. I am not disposed to murmur at any matter, for I have fallen so much into the Oriental indifference, that I seldom think upon the time or distance, but to note it down; fourteen hours on a camel, however, beneath a hot sun, is no light labour. The ground we passed over was poor in pasture, yet still rich in flowers. Hares enlivened the way as usual; as did the jerboa, which is the most delicate and graceful creature possible: we found them generally close to their holes, where they stood till they saw the danger was real, and then endeavoured to escape; but the Arabs knocked them down with their short sticks, which I have observed they lance with great precision.

On the way we saw two watch-towers, to which the Arabs gave names. They were at a great distance apart. On the last which we came to, about the period of Aszur, a boy was standing, shouting and waving a lure to his hawk. The Bedouins are partial to this sport of hawking, which is a favourite diversion all over the East. It was dusk when we arrived at a singular hollow, completely surrounded by

rough rocks, and having very much the appearance of a dry lake; the Arabs declare that there never was water in it notwithstanding. "Eousir Hubbus" is the name of the station.

The Bedouins of the caravan, whose duty it is to drive the camels, are the most indefatigable fellows in the world; from daylight in the morning they are on foot in the front, shouting constantly to keep the animals together. On finishing the journey, they unload them and arrange the camp; then follow them to pasture, and tend them, lest they stray, till night-fall; when they gather them into their proper places, and rub tar over those that have the mange, or have been sheared. They sleep in the midst of their charge, ready to jump up on the least noise or motion, and take their tour in the guards of the night. An hour before the camp, they are on the alert in the morning to commence the labour of a new day: they sleep like dogs whenever they have a moment to spare, and endure all this with no other food than coarse bread and a few vegetables; with nothing to drink beyond the indifferent water of the way. I have counted four sorts of plants of which they eat, besides

truffles and onions, with the names of which I am not acquainted, nor indeed do I know a third of the flowers that cover the plain; they become more numerous as we approach the Euphrates.

April 22.—The interest and excitement of this day's journey can be equalled only by an approach to land after a long voyage; it partook of the same sort of anxiety that a sailor feels on making an unknown port. To an unpractised eye like mine, it was something to know that we had made a good fall where there are so few landmarks to direct. We started at four in the morning, and passing over an unbounded plain, after we had escaped from the depth we had occupied last night, perceived, at eight o'clock, the first symptom of the inhabited world, in the village of Koubayssa. A tall spire, rising from a grove of date-trees, was all that was yet visible. It was eleven o'clock before we reached it; a miserable place, surrounded by a wall like a fortified town, which may be necessary on the verge of the freebooters' territory. The camels seemed, by their haste, to be aware

that we were drawing towards the river; they struggled past each other where the way was narrow, and ran towards any little stream they saw; for there are a number all round that flow from the salt-pans in the neighbourhood of Hit.

In four hours from Koubayssa we entered a narrow passage where the ground was covered with salt, as it had been at some distance before we reached it; on the right hand now were numerous salt-pans, from which the water ran off in countless conduits. The camels were so anxious to drink that it was impossible to restrain them; they wandered in all directions; some climbed over the black mounds between the salt-pits, and hastened down their sides, in defiance of the riders' endeavours to check them, threatening to discharge their loads in the salt.

A string of asses, carrying bitumen in panniers, had the misfortune to fall in the way. Some were overthrown; and the baskets of all being perfectly full and open at the top, dropped the pitch in large masses as they ran, their drivers screaming and cursing. All the people

of the village hastened to the walls to greet the caravan, and shouts of recognition took place between the parties. The way became narrower, and the camels, struggling on, were positively wedged together; jars and boxes, meeting in contact, were broken; the loose articles fell to the ground; riders and drivers wielded their sticks on all hands, cursing and calling on Mohammed and the name of Allah in the same breath. So terrible a confusion I never beheld.

I was sitting cross-legged on my camel, to avoid the crushing and bumping among the loaded ones, with great doubt of the result of such a squeeze, when on the right hand of the town, from a rising ground but a few yards from its banks, I beheld the Euphrates! Many camels were already in the river, and we lost every control of those approaching it. I leaped from mine just as the close mass was forced to pause before it entered the water, and left it to rush by itself into the stream. This is the twentieth day that these animals have passed without drinking. I have observed them much,

and am certain that not one drop has been given to any since the 3rd of April.

The works of salt and bitumen around Hit give a most singular appearance to the country. The string of asses that we overset might, in earlier ages, have been on their road to Babylon with cement for the construction of the city. The most learned geographers are of opinion that this town is the Is of Herodotus, whence the Babylonians drew the bitumen with which they bound their bricks.

We walked through the city, for the ferry was at the opposite side to that at which we had just arrived. It has one long street, that runs from gate to gate. We found all the inhabitants sitting at their doors, and received the salutation of peace from them — with a more perfect blessing from the elder men, which, pronounced with a deep tone, and in a benign manner, as it always is, has a peculiarly grateful sound: "Upon you also be peace, with the mercy and blessing of God!" As it is not familiar to my ears, I am very much struck by it. They are words of course with Mahome-

tans, I day say; but even *they* must attach a solemnity to them, for they are never uttered but by old men.

The transporting the goods across the river was a busy scene; the Arabs worked to a very lively air, that they all sung in chorus. I went over in the first boat; and, spreading my carpet on the sand, passed the night by the shores of the Euphrates. There were no trees near, and but little cultivation. The stream is disfigured by a great many aqueducts, only one of which seems to be worked. They speak of the superiority of past times, but have rather the appearance now of broken bridges, without any picturesque effect. The stone-work is very strong, and some of the conduits run to a good distance into the land. The wheels are turned by the action of the current; and the earthen pots on their rims, which go down inverted, deposit their contents in a reservoir as they return. This in the East is the most general, as, from its simplicity, it was probably the earliest machine used for raising water.

CHAPTER VIII.

Banks of the Euphrates.—Ravages of the Plague.—Jewish Families.—Use of a Saint's Tomb.—Eastern Prejudices regarding Perfumes.—Dock-yard of Hit.—A few Hours by the Waters of Babylon.—Summary of our March across the Desert.—Ibrahim Pasha.—Leave Hit.—Hot and Stony Plain.—Fatiguing Journey.—Toilette in the Desert.—Approach to Bagdad.—Abd-ul-Kerim's Hospitality.—Affectionate Manners of the Bedouins towards each other.—English Residents in Bagdad.—Character of Abd-ul-Kerim.

April 23.—We are still lying by the Euphrates, unable, from the time required to pass over the camels, to move until to-morrow. The river is here a good breadth; I should conjecture, four hundred yards. Hillah, on the site of Babylon, is by the stream several days' journey below us; by land, the Arabs say, eight. Above, the nearest city of any consequence is Auna. Hit, which we are now contemplating, is wretched, the houses half fallen down, and the population dwindled away by

the plague of last year. A youth, who joined the caravan as we approached the town, told me, that of thirty-nine relations he was the only survivor; that seven thousand five hundred died out of a population of eight thousand.

Mr. Calmun discovered a few Jewish families still remaining, but dressed so perfectly in the Arab style that they might have escaped discovery until closely observed. The expression of the race, however, is so strongly marked, and so invariably fixed, that, of whatever colour or in whatever costume they may be, they are still detected. This is particularly striking in the Desert, when, from under the shawl of the Bedouin, such a face is exposed as might draw your attention to an old-clothes shop in London.

The dust was so thick to-day that it was impossible to cook. Perceiving the tomb of a saint at a little distance, I told Hassan to convert it into a kitchen. He was scandalized at such an appropriation, and declared that the saint would revenge the indignity upon him when dead, if his living disciples allowed him to escape in this life. The sand, which came like a simoom upon us, conquered his scruples at

length, and we made ourselves more comfortable in the neighbourhood of "Sheikh Abdulla's" resting-place.

The Easterns attach great power to strong scents, and are generally averse to their use, except for the medical properties they may possess. I opened this morning a bottle of atar of roses, which had so great an effect in the camp that the Arabs came to beg that I would close it up again immediately; it would make the men ill, they said, and ruin the camels; every one that had an eruption on the skin would be rendered useless if they inhaled such an odour. Sir John Chardin, I remember, in his Travels in Persia, alluding to the state of sickness in the island of Ceylon, observes, that the Europeans attributed their diseases to the very strong scent of the cinnamon wood, which inflamed their humours; the notion, therefore, is not confined to the uncivilized.

On the opposite bank of the river several boats are on the stocks. Those that are the least advanced look like hurdles. They are to be covered with skins or with straw, and then

plastered over with pitch, which bubbles up in little pits, heated with charcoal, along the edge of the dock-yard of Hit. They are all of one form, long and sharp. They do not seem to use the circular boats described by Herodotus: at least on this part of the Euphrates I have not seen any. The manner of building the vessels they now use, however, is precisely the same. The oars are crooked branches of trees, with a piece of cross wood at the end, about a foot long and three inches wide. They have been crossing backwards and forwards to-day incessantly. The stream is very rapid, and the boats are hurried considerably below the landing-place, up to which they are with much labour tracked.

It has been so hot that I have not moved about much during the day, and everything has been in great confusion. A few hours could scarcely be unprofitably spent, however, by the waters of Babylon. As everything seems to me to be unchanged from the earliest times, I may survey from my narrow carpet the manners and customs of the days of Semiramis; the same aqueducts on my right and left irrigate the

land; the same description of boat plies on the water, formed still of willow and of skins; while, from the same pits, comes the bitumen which was transported in such quantities to Babylon in the age of its "excellency;" the same swarthy people throng the shores too, dressed in similar garbs,—a linen vest falling to the feet, and one of wool thrown over it. The women wear cloaks, striped white and black, and carry large pitchers on their heads; and, in their passage to and fro for water, add considerably to the animation of the scene.

The caravan is now assembled on the eastern bank, and ranged along it at meals: the numerous fires shining in the stream, make a lively and most beautiful picture. After so long a journey through a sandy region, I expected to see the Arabs rush into the "Phrat" with the same anxiety that their camels did; but not one has even dipped his hands, unless by accident, in the stream.

Our course from Damascus has been nearly due east, at the rate of two miles and a half an hour. We have accomplished about four hundred and eighty miles; the longest period

without finding water has been six days. The Syrian Desert,—that through which we have passed,—is esteemed the most trying, and least productive; yet we have found it full of pasture. Not one animal has died during the journey, nor have I heard of a man in the caravan having been in the least unwell. What then is there terrible in a desert, and what to deter the march of an army across it? Ibrahim Pasha, who threatens the Pashalic of Bagdad, may transport his thousands as easily as our hundreds have been led through it. From Auna to Tadmor, there is water every day; and to the south, from Meshed Hossein and Meshed Ali to Mecca,—the route of the caravan,—there are well-constructed wells in great number; by this road, in the high days of Bagdad, the caliphs travelled over carpets spread before them as they went: such luxury is now no more, and the facility of which I speak, is, perhaps, only to be found in the Deserts of Syria and Arabia; but they are not in the European sense of the words deserts, neither barren nor unpeopled. Ibrahim Pasha, I conceive, would come from the side of Aleppo, or of Tarsus, and follow

the march of the younger Cyrus, whose fatal battle of Cunaxa was fought a short distance below this city.

April 26th. — On the 24th we left Hit and followed the course of the river for some distance, passing the mounds of sand that are parallel to it, and, turning to the left hand towards the Tigris, entered, for the first time since we have left Damascus, a parched and barren waste. In six hours we encamped where there was not a blade of grass, and on sand that scorched the feet. We had made this short journey to draw the people away from the river, and remained the night, that we might commence a more arduous one on the following morning.

From daylight of the 25th, until five o'clock in the afternoon, we trotted briskly over the plain, and disengaged ourselves from the caravan. Our reduced number amounted to fifty; it was excessively hot, and the reflection of the sun's rays from the dry soil was beyond endurance; a steam seemed to arise from the earth, arid as it was, and the countless small flat stones which covered it shone so brightly

and with so unsteady a light through the thin vapour, that a thousand different colours danced before my eyes. I thought I should have fallen from my camel: I covered my head up completely, and with the twilled handkerchief so bandaged my face that I might have passed for a mummy. Not one word was spoken till we arrived by the banks of a lake, formed principally by the rain, the neighbourhood of which was green and full of shrubs: it was luxury beyond expression to stretch upon the grass, and in a very few minutes I was fast asleep.

We were to continue our journey when the moon rose; it was necessary, therefore, to break the fast which we had kept through the long day, and, between sleeping and waking, we contrived to cook the last of our provisions. Before we had well ended the labour, which it really was, we were summoned once more to mount, and trotted on with silence beneath the brightest moon and clearest sky that can be imagined—such as from these plains may have been so often contemplated by the Chaldean sages. About midnight we stopped once more to rest: I was scarcely awake, and when my camel

knelt down I rolled off its back, and remember that an Arab dragged me to the shelter of a plant, beneath which I found my head when I awoke in the morning with the indefatigable Mohammed's cry of "Wullah" in my ears. It was just dawn, and we were again to set forth. Seventeen hours' riding, and but four hours' sleep, with another scorching day before us! Now, with all my vaunting, I begin to find out what the Desert is.

We travelled till three o'clock without any object to interest us: the camels, however, seemed to understand that we were near our journey's end. Within two hours of the Tigris, there is a small tank, with the ruins of buildings about it: we paused upon its bank, and in a moment every Arab was naked, dipping, swimming, and shouting in the water, which was in the middle of sufficient depth. This was too agreeable a scene to resist, and in a short time I shook off the dust of the Desert from me in the same manner. The Arabs, I found, had been hurrying on to reach this bath before dusk, for here they wash and dress preparatory to entering the city. On coming from the

water they selected the finest clothes they had brought from Damascus, and arrayed themselves in them: there was not one that did not dress himself in a new suit.

When this ceremony was over, we mounted again, and shining in yellow, scarlet, and gold, set off as fast as our animals could go. We hailed at length the noble minarets of "El Cadum" glittering among date trees. It was five o'clock when we reached the Tigris, its bank green with grain, and travellers of every description hastening towards the city of Bagdad, which now began to rise before us. The river was at its height, and had but lately overflowed its banks: it wound rapidly through groves, or forests rather, of date trees, which stretched along both sides to a great distance. It was dusk when we entered the gates.

Abd-ul-Kerim had, with Arab hospitality, insisted on our remaining with him until we should in the morning be able to find places for ourselves. We accepted his offer readily, and are now reposing on the roof of an Arab house. Mysterious figures in impenetrable veils are cooking in the court below, while Nubian

slave-girls pass to and fro with wood or water for the operation. A lamb has been killed, and a double feast is preparing; one for the master, who, on a terrace opposite that which we occupy, has assembled a dozen Arabs of the tribe, who have come to greet him on his arrival.

I have not before mentioned the affectionate manners of the Bedouins towards each other. They always kiss on meeting, and by no means with the coldness of ceremony or respect; they rush to each other's lips and kiss in good earnest, and afterwards go through the many questions and answers which really give the appearance of form to their salutation. I observed two or three young men in the Desert who kissed Abd-ul-Kerim whenever they met him for the first time during the day, and then sat with much respect by his side. Our dinner was, as usual, a pilao, with cakes and milk.

And now that all the household is at rest, I may close my rapid sketch of their doings. We have despatched a messenger to the other side of the river, to announce our arrival to the English Resident; and to-morrow I shall have the happiness to be among those whose

names have been long associated with Bagdad in matters of the highest interest,—Mr. Grove, and his companions Messrs. Parnell and Cronan.

April 27th.—At daylight, Abd-ul-Kerim received us with bread and milk and dates, that we might not leave his roof fasting. He is a person of much wealth, and has an excellent house, standing in the centre of the city. The neatness of all about is very striking: early as it was, the court and the rooms were swept clean, and no appearance of the late feast of the night before was to be seen. Our breakfast was served in wooden bowls, as well scoured as they might have been in an English farm-house. It is impossible to speak too highly of our host: his kindness and consideration for us in the Desert, on the smallest occasion, without the least display — his quiet politeness, which would have become the best bred man of the polished world, anticipated all we could require, and, watching over us in every situation, would induce me, could I be justified in painting a whole race from one man, to uphold the Arabs beyond every people I have yet met. I have already mentioned the disinterested kind-

ness of a city Arab, "Mustapha Shellibie;" two such instances may, I think, warrant me in going a great length: but other painters have been too often obliged to use darker colours. I will congratulate myself therefore in having been so much more fortunate than they: I have found the characters of Arab story, and not of European travels.

CHAPTER IX.

Wretched State of Bagdad irreconcileable with the accounts of its former Splendour.—Coffee-houses on the Banks of the River.—Manner of supplying the Town with Water.—Pits of Bitumen.—Contiguity of Splendour and Poverty.—Misery of the Town from Pestilence and Siege.—The present Pasha—Atrocious conduct of his Soldiers.—Colonel Taylor—Universal respect entertained for him throughout the Pashalick.—Insurmountable Decay of Bagdad.—Management of the Round Boats on the Tigris.—Expected Inundation.—Habit of Sleeping on the Roofs.

An Eastern city is, I have before observed, a mirage: Bagdad belongs to poetry, and even its historical splendour seems to have lived only in the fancies of those who related it. It is not easy to believe, in winding through the narrow dirty streets, with gloomy unplastered brick-houses of all forms and heights—low unwholesome-looking passages of shops, beggars and porters, stopping up the way—asses laden with water-skins dropping their contents as they move over the feet of the passengers—camels

whose bales bulging out to the walls on each side, threaten to squeeze them to a mummy,—that this is the celebrated seat of the magnificent caliphs, and of that hero of all kings, Haroun-el-Raschid,—

"Where the gorgeous East
Shower'd on its kings barbaric pearl and gold."

Although the city lies now in ruins nearly, its general appearance, its size, the arrangement of its streets and bazars, the manner of its houses, its mosques, are precisely what they were in its best and proudest days. There is still the Tigris, however, to gratify the most fastidious traveller. As I crossed it by a bridge of boats, it presented a most animated and beautiful scene. It is here six hundred feet wide; I counted two hundred and seventy paces over the bridge. Long and thick groves of date trees border it below the city, and balconies hang over it on each side. The latticed windows that all have, make them more like prisons than places of enjoyment, and the lower part of the houses are mere walls of brick, with, in some of them, a small wooden door that leads into the "ler-dab," or cellar, in which the people

sit during the heat of the day in summer. The only open terraces or balconies towards the stream are those of the coffee-houses, where on high benches lounge the men, with pipes at their lips: the window-seats in most hang completely over the water, which during a flood runs through them. There are in one or two places steps for landing, where all the women of the neighbourhood are generally collected together to fill their pitchers.

In the heart of the town, the narrow streets that terminate at the river's bank, are choked up with mules and their drivers passing backward and forward for water: for, convenient as the river is for the purpose, there is no place for furnishing water to any part of the town, and, unlike Damascus, it seems quite destitute of fountains. Many large vessels laden with skins from below, and rafts upon inflated skins from above, just arrived, or broken up for the purpose of selling the wood, lie close to the shore. There are logs of floating timber, or heaps of it on the land; boats undergoing repair, or being built; pits full of bitumen, only detected by the smell, boiling along the quay

without the least defence about them: and all this in so narrow a space, that there is much difficulty in threading the way.

By the time I reached Mr. Grove's house, I was satisfied that the Bagdad of the "Arabian Nights" and the city on the banks of the Tigris were two very different places. Great splendour and miserable poverty have always been close neighbours in the East. To warn a monarch of the instability of greatness, it was not necessary to point beyond the next abode to his palace, perhaps some wretched hovel; for in such manner in the most flourishing towns of modern days are houses mixed as I have no doubt they were in earlier and in richer times. Despotism is the great whirlpool that absorbs all—no wonder the shallower parts should at length become dry.

This unfortunate city has for two successive seasons been ravaged by the plague. An affecting account of the progress of this dreadful visitation has been published in a journal kept by Mr. Grove, who was saved throughout a period of the most complicated misery that could befal mankind. At the same moment an

enemy was at the gates of the town, inundation within its walls, and pestilence as well as famine in every house. When the plague was at its height, the besieging army sat down before the city. The unhappy inhabitants who were yet able secured their property in the lower parts of their houses; then broke in the river and swept it away, destroying whole quarters of the city at once! Those who were not strong enough to escape were drowned: it is computed that on one dreadful night fifteen thousand people were carried away by the flood. That part of the town overthrown lies still in ruins,—beggars, dogs, and lepers creeping about it. There is scarcely a street that has not marks of the destruction that assailed it. Nothing was sold in the shops; and when the scanty provision of each house was exhausted, the animals that happened to be in them were loosened and sent into the streets to seek food for themselves, where dying, they spread about the corruption: the water-carriers could no longer ply their trade, and those who were parched with fever fell exhausted in their at-

tempts to reach the river: mothers, when they found death coming upon them, gathered the little strength they had left, to carry their infants into the streets, in the hope that should they escape contagion, they might by some good passer-by be saved from starving: children of a few weeks old were found carelessly wrapped up, and many still survive ignorant alike of their parents and their religion. There was no escape from the city: many who attempted to reach the shore of the Euphrates were met by its waters, and, driven back upon the swelling Tigris, were drowned.

Daoud Pasha was at length attacked by the disease, and having lost all his troops, a regiment of Georgians, his own nation, being annihilated, he abandoned the town to its present ruler and escaped by the river. The Albanians, who composed chiefly the invading army, destroyed by fire and the sword a great portion of what had yet been saved. The palace has not one room remaining; its outer wall only stands to show its extent. The population at the breaking out of the plague was eighty thousand; fifty thousand died of the disease

alone. Bagdad is now as wretched and fallen in its appearance as St. Jean d'Acre. War and pestilence have walked unchecked through the dominions of the Turk; may we not read in this a judgment against the power of Mohammed, which surely must fall, dwindled to a shadow as it now is?

The present Pasha was governor of Aleppo, and being appointed to the Pashalick of Bagdad, came with an army of seven thousand men to unseat the actual ruler, who with true Turkish spirit refused to abdicate. Ali Pasha has been in Trieste; so, having visited Frangistan, is very much of a reformer, even to wearing the dress of the new Turkish army. His love for wine, I hear, is particularly distinguished; but he is unfortunately not able to command his troops, who are the most unruly monsters that I ever heard of;—they plunder in open day, and frequently extort money from passengers on condition that they may be spared from death or mutilation. A youth of twenty years of age, who is now under the refuge of this roof, was not many days ago walking quietly through the streets, when a knot of these ruffians stop-

ped him, and desired him to fall upon his knees, that he might have his head cut off. He naturally objected to this dangerous mode of amusement; but, resolved upon pursuing their humour, the soldiers would listen to no remonstrance. Their victim resisted, and calling for assistance, attracted a shopkeeper, who endeavoured to appease his persecutors. "What will you give to save his head?" asked the soldiers. The merchant, I think, named a sum which was not deemed satisfactory; the devoted head was bargained for as if it had been a piece of merchandise—the sum offered was not considered sufficient to save it; the matter therefore was compromised, and the boy was allowed to depart with the loss of his hand. He held it out, and receiving one cut, ran with it dangling from his wrist, to beg assistance and shelter here. He is recovering very fast.

Two women have come into sanctuary also, under the fear of being converted to Islamism by such a process as was adopted towards the Sabine dames, and which prevailed, as I have observed, in Tiberias: they have as yet been saved. Such adventures as these, I am told, are

very frequent: several others have occurred during the short time that I have been in the city. A boy took refuge at the Residency to avoid a similar fate to that threatened the Christian maidens, and being smuggled on board a boat bound for Bussorah during the night, escaped from his persecution.

A feeble ruler at the head of an arbitrary government, with a lawless soldiery, is indeed a fearful arrangement. The Pasha's notorious namesake of Janina would be preferable, for he would suffer no interference with his privilege of cutting and maiming. There it seems to be a general amusement. It is a great blessing that the English name is respected in the midst of the anarchy. Colonel Taylor, who has been some years envoy in Turkish Arabia, is so eminently distinguished for his Oriental learning, his deep knowledge of the customs of the East, and his skill in its diplomacy, that he commands the esteem, and I may say the obedience, of every class in the city, or tribe of Arabs within the jurisdiction of the Pashalick. His name has been sufficient to ensure a safe passage to travellers during the wildest times.

The city of Bagdad is well known: travellers have for many years lamented its decay. I seem to have arrived at the consummation nearly of its wretchedness; it never can recover from the blow that it has within the last two years received. Abd-ul-Kerim in conversation declared, although it is his native city, that the gilding and ornaments of one house in Damascus would purchase a whole street in Bagdad. This observation will serve to settle the comparative wealth of the two cities. There are gardens within and without the walls. Eastern gardens at the best are but poor places; these are generally composed of date trees, with a few oranges and citrons, but flowers are seldom to be seen.

May 2nd.—The increase of the river has rendered it necessary to remove the bridge. The face of the stream is now enlivened by the perpetual twist of the singular circular boats that ply in great numbers across. The passengers squeezed as closely as possible together in them, look as if they had been packed in baskets and launched to the mercy of the current. Notwithstanding the velocity of the stream, they make the passage in a very short time.

In the cool of the evening I have sometimes walked to the coffee-houses that overhang the stream, and from their windows enjoyed the fresh air and admired the animation of the scene. The manner of constructing the round boats is well known: they are managed generally by two men, although I have seen three, two pushing against the set of the current, while the third paddles more gently in the opposite way. I am inclined to think when observing these black tubs, that no other form of boat would answer the purpose. The Tigris, which the Arabs call "Dijilah," is so rapid in the centre, that a long vessel would be hurried down to too great a length before it could reach the stiller water of the sides, and a long track would be necessary. The Arabs most generally call this river "El Shat," or "The River." In Dijilah the learned see a simple corruption from the Hiddekel of Scripture.

The river is still rising, and there are whispers of the possibility of an inundation. Some showers have fallen. Although not very usual in the month of May, it is exceedingly hot in the day-time; but at night, as the habit is to sleep

on the roof, with heaven for a canopy, the richest that can be conceived, it is cool and agreeable. The roofs of the houses are divided, and have large parapets between them. Carpets are carried up in the evening: the females occupy the roof of their portion, while the men rest above that that is inhabited by them. I have hired two mules to take me to Babylon, and in three or four days shall set out.

CHAPTER X.

Expedition to Babylon commenced.—Embark in a Confa.—Leave Bagdad.—Arab Coffee-house.—My Guide to Babel.—A Storm.—Passage across a Ferry.—The Pasha and the Boatmen of Bagdad.—A Mishap.—Travellers from Hillah.—Encampment of Arabs.—Mistaken for a Turk.—Dinner in the Tent.—Hassan and the Wonders of Frangistan.—Grinding Corn.—Plaintive Song.

May 5th.—At six this morning I mounted my mule, and, accompanied by Hassan and a sturdy muleteer, commenced my expedition to Babylon. The Arabs have an idea that it is devotion that leads European travellers to wander over the Desert to the ruins of Babel; for they cannot conceive, nor am I surprised at it, the possibility of a rational being being led only by curiosity to so great a distance.

The Tigris was so swollen that the bridge of boats could not be thrown across. We embarked therefore in a "confa," the name of the circular boat, in company with six men, a woman and

two mules, closely packed together in a basket of about four feet in diameter. We crept along the walls of the city for some distance, and then shooting into the middle of the stream, wound away at a great rate, and in about twenty minutes landed on the opposite side a long way below the point from which we had set out.

In very humble state, riding over my saddle-bags, followed by Hassan, and preceded by Abdulla, who was on foot armed with a small stick having a tremendous knob at the end of it, I wound through the crowded streets of the Arab city of Bagdad. The last year's inundation of the river had washed down all the houses on its banks, and in many parts of it had penetrated to the very centre, where its ravages were still visible. The plague too had depopulated this side nearly, as it had done the other; yet from the great concourse of Arabs, this being the quarter where the caravans and all connected with them rest, the streets were more thronged and more business seemed stirring than in the opposite side. I met several of my old fellow-travellers from Damascus wandering about in fine dresses and rich pipes

from that famous city. They were glad to see me, and, surprised at my want of escort, fancied I had been plundered in the neighbourhood. They crowded anxiously about to question me of the adventure, and, I thought, looked as if the robbing had been rather a good joke.

This reminded me, however, of the possibility of such a risk, and I took one as a guide to the house of Abd-ul-Kerim, who had been so kind in my former journey, to ask his assistance. He was not at home; but my guide insisted on my going to an Arab coffee-house until I could procure a protector. I soon reached the best in the town, which, happening to be quite full, gave one of the most amusing pictures possible. The Arabs were lounging in all directions, but with the utmost solemnity; some were in conversation, but scarcely above a whisper, the bubbling of the Narguile being the only continued sound.

I had not been long among the group when I was discovered by Suleiman, who hastened towards me with the utmost delight, led me to a narrow wooden bench, upon which I was compelled to sit cross-legged in a line of Arabs,

ordered me a pipe and a cup of coffee, and with the most magnificent air putting a few copper pieces into the hands of the cup-bearer, desired him to repeat the ceremony as often as I wished. Notwithstanding my appearance as a foreigner and a Frank, which I could not disguise, I was not in the least annoyed by the curiosity even of the Arabs. Nothing could surpass the politeness of their manners: their bearing towards me would have given me an idea that they had taken me for an Arab, if I had not known that to have been impossible.

By the time I had finished two pipes and had become tired enough of my position, one of my Arab friends returned to acquaint me that he had been successful in finding a guide who would go with me to Babel if I would reward him handsomely. I at once named a hundred piastres, and they all exclaimed, "That will do; let us go — he will be at a coffee-house at the end of the town."

It was now about two o'clock, and I found my destined fellow-traveller ready to set out, armed with a hatchet, a club, and a matchlock. I knew his face; he was one of the caravan from

Damascus, an active, good-humoured-looking fellow: I soon settled the affair by paying my promised reward before we started; but as Arabs are never content with what they receive, I agreed to give a present on my return if we parted good friends. He kissed all the men among whom we were, who seemed, from the noise they made about the "buxees" he was to receive on our return, to have come on purpose to fix me by their clamour if I felt at all backward.

At length we set off, a party of four, resembling pilgrims in the sobriety of our march, on some painful penance. We were soon out of the walls of the city, and passing two tombs on a little rising ground, one of them said to be to the memory of Zobeid, the wife of Haroun-el-Raschid, we stood again in the Desert. We had scarcely got out of sight of the gate, when rain fell most piteously, accompanied by violent thunder and lightning. We had now no alternative but to proceed. The river had over flowed its banks, and the country we were approaching seemed one sheet of water.

In three hours we came to a spot where the

waters joined, and found a confa plying over it, that had been carried from the Tigris. Its owners had monopolized the ferry, and at least fifty people were waiting for a passage. They were seated in a line under the lee of a bank of mud about three feet high, with their cloaks drawn over their heads; I dismounted and took up my position on the left of their line, which was the nearest point to the water, and desired my Arab to hail the boatman. This he did with so much authority, that the grim waterman suspected a more than ordinary passenger; and unfortunately my legs were so awkwardly stuck out, and, compared to those around me, were so white, that he exclaimed, "Hu Frangi! —A Frank!" and so gave me up to the anxious curiosity of my wet neighbours. "Who is a Frank, you father of a basket?" shouted Hassan, ever ready in my defence; "bring your vessel to shore immediately." "What will you pay?" cried the boatman, drawing a little closer. "You shall see when we reach the other side." "Fifty piastres" he then demanded, paddling further out from the shore.

This exorbitant sum drew all the expectant

passengers about me, speculating, I have no doubt, upon getting a passage at my expense. I resisted, however, and gave rise to a tremendous uproar, in which the abuse that passed on either side was horrible. At length I endeavoured to reconcile matters, and offered to pay thrice as much for each of my party as any one else paid: this was hailed on my side as a liberal offer, and I found I was drawing to my service several volunteers who were travelling the same road, and who meant to assist the boatman in his extortion by being numbered in my suite. This was worse than ever: so I loudly declared I would give no more than fifteen piastres; and added, to give weight to my determination, that Ali Pasha had given me his firmaun, and to him should I make known the insolence of the boatmen.

This was an unfortunate speech, and turned the whole party against me, who with one voice abused my protector the Pasha of Bagdad, and his protégé, myself, in the most unmeasured manner, committing the representative of the caliphs, and all his forefathers, to eternal flames, and calling down curses on the unbelieving Franks

throughout the world, particularly on the arch-infidel who had dared to set up the Pasha against the boatmen of Bagdad. It was impossible to check the clamour; so I withdrew to my wet bank, resolved patiently to await the issue.

It was still blowing and raining tremendously, and the loud arguments did not abate; I had resolved to give no more, and to speak no more, but had great difficulty to bring Hassan to my way of thinking, who, enraged at some reflections on his country, was unwilling to give up the species of retort at which the Arabs are so fluent. He had been discovered as an Egyptian from some peculiarity in his pronunciation. The storm of voices at last subsided, and the boatmen agreed to take my whole party over for fifteen piastres, on condition that I should pay beforehand. To this I readily agreed; and, after a most minute scrutiny of the money, dripping wet, and covered with mud, for the bank had gradually given way to the waters, we scrambled into the little tub about which we had had so much altercation. It was as full as it could hold: my saddle-bags

had yet escaped a wetting, but just as we neared the opposite bank, the mules, anxious to move on, endeavoured to leap out, and missing the ground, floundered into the stream: away went the bags in full swing down the river, while I was assailed by volunteers to save them, who underbid each other for a reward with as much emulation as buyers at an auction rise in their prices. I had now another battle to fight: —my clothes were at last rescued, and I once more jogged on my pilgrimage.

It was now so late that there was no possibility of gaining the nearest khan, and my Arab guide, Abd-ul-Azee, proposed that we should leave the track, and spend the night in a Bedouin camp, to which he would introduce us. I was delighted at any means of rest, and readily assented. I had a capacious pair of Turkish trousers on, that by good management I had yet kept dry, and in passing over a causeway through a species of lake, consoling myself with the notion that I should at least be comfortable in them during the night, I had begun to tuck them well up, when my mule missed her footing, and bringing half the bank with

her, tumbled head foremost into the water, and I found myself, after I was disengaged from my awkward beast, up to my waist. A loud laugh hailed this exhibition, but no assistance.

I have often had occasion to know that the Arabs think every dilemma a good joke, and that to offer help in an accident would detract too much from the manhood of the sufferer.

We pursued our journey nearly parallel to the Tigris, the minarets and cupolas of Bagdad rising on our left hand; and before sunset fell in with a small party of travellers from Hillah, who had established themselves for the night, on a patch of comparatively dry ground, under the lee of a little thicket. They had just begun to make coffee, and I dismounted and squatted with my party round the fire they had kindled. They were excessively civil and hospitable, and handed coffee first to the strangers; the pipe then went round the circle, and when we had all smoked, we rose, exchanged the usual blessings, and continued our route.

In half an hour we reached an encampment of Arabs, consisting of two rows of tents with a broad street between them, and situated rather

in a hollow; the women were bringing in wood, while the cattle and flocks were drawing towards their resting-places. Sunset is always a busy scene in a shepherd's life, and the Arabs of this camp were only shepherds, merely grazed their herds where they best could, belonged to none of the great tribes, nor possessed any riches. The only animals of burthen I saw were asses, to which my guide pointed with some contempt when I questioned him about my future hosts. We pulled up at a miserable little tent which was dripping wet, and without ceremony sat down at the door; an old woman sat in the middle of it, while a girl of about sixteen years old was preparing cakes near her.

The poor girl was so thinly and miserably clad that I had some scruples about remaining to benefit by their hospitality. Abd-ul-Azee, however, in an authoritative manner desired me to sit still, and commenced deliberately to prepare his pipe. The women took no notice of us, nor seemed the least struck by an appearance of novelty that we certainly must have had; they retained that perfect self-possession so striking in the Arabs, who, either from great

politeness or indifference, never, until encouraged, show the least curiosity regarding their guests.

When the master of the tent, a handsome young man, made his appearance, he bade us welcome with great kindness, and ordered a fire to be lit on the lee side of it. We soon had a blaze, and began to dry our clothes. I took off the trousers I have already mentioned, and had spread them out with great innocence over the flame, when I heard whispering among my host and his friends that seemed to relate to me, in which the words "Toorki" and "Frangi" were chiefly distinguishable. At length they approached, and laying hands on my trousers, turned them over and over, looking steadfastly at me, apparently not the least pleased. Hassan perceived the dilemma, and immediately came to my aid: "Cannot a Frank wear the trousers of a Turk?" said he; "hold them near the fire." This produced an *eclaircissement*, and they were delighted to find that I was not a Turk when I had cast my skin. "Had you been one," said an Arab, "you might have slept here on the

ground, perhaps; but you should have had no fire nor food: you will eat now, however," he continued; and called with a loud voice for "Zemzem," the old crone that I had seen sitting in the middle of the tent: in an instant dinner was before us; a bowl of sweet milk, a bowl of sour milk, and a bowl of butter. The little girl then brought a bundle of flat cakes, and, throwing them on the ground with an air of great kindness, disappeared to bake more.

We set to work in good earnest,—all hands tearing away at the bread, and splashing in the milk-bowls, till we very soon cleared them; the women carried them away, and then came my turn to entertain. Hassan made coffee, and my party, as usual, increased; and we talked of the wonders of Frangistan until I sunk to sleep. Hassan, who was my interpreter, had much to do to persuade my listeners to believe half of that which he repeated to them. It is, after all, no slight disadvantage to be the greatest traveller in the company; I am afraid that among the wisest he is held in some suspicion, and I was not surprised therefore that

my uncivilised friends should have doubted my narrations. They attended to them nevertheless with great interest, and, as the rain had ceased, we formed a pleasant group round the crackling fire.

The women in the neighbouring tents were grinding corn, and the dull sound of the stones was neither disagreeable nor unsuited to the scene. They accompanied the labour with the most plaintive song I ever heard; it was almost a moan; and it seemed as if they sung in concert, they kept so admirably together.

CHAPTER XI.

Khan of Awazee.—Robbery of a Village by Arab Soldiers.—Exhilarating effect of Coffee in the Desert.—An Alarm.—Proposal to join a Band of Thieves.—A Manœuvre.—Sites of former Cities.—Khan of Secunderia.—Arrival of the young Sheikh of the Azael Arabs—His Herald—The Sheikh himself and his retinue—Conversation with him.—A Laureat Song.—The Singer's Reward.—Arrival of my former companions the Thieves.—Persians on their way to Meshed Ali with a Corpse.—Price of an Escort from the Sheikh.—Party of Horse-dealers.

At daylight we set out, having made a present to my host for his hospitality. Returning to the regular track from which we had been obliged the night before to deviate, we found a perfect desert; and about seven o'clock came within sight of a small village, in which there was a khan, called "Awazee." As we were seen approaching, the people gathered upon the surrounding mounds,—for it stood above the plain, and had a species of defence round it that may once have been a mud wall—and hal-

looed and screeched in a most earnest manner. None of my party could understand the meaning of this; but as we occasionally fancied we distinguished the word "robbers," and as we were still far off, we suspected something in the way of a skirmish awaited us, and that seeing the train of a knight-errant approach, the beleaguered city was anxious to learn to which party we proposed to give succour.

Our sorry figures, as we shuffled along upon jaded mules, could hardly have promised much. It was something however to be hailed with anxiety, as we found on coming nearer was really the case. A miserable heap of mud huts composed the village; the people looked wretched in the extreme, and were collected at the entrance of the only street. There was a general moan on our arrival; and, when I reached the khan, the sheikh told me the cause of it. Three Arab soldiers of the Pasha of Bagdad, on their way to Hillah, had lodged in the village last night, and robbed from the people who had sheltered them, some clothes, and two hundred and twenty piastres, about two pounds. The theft was not discovered till a little after their

departure, which took place an hour before we arrived.

From the general sensation created by this loss, I should imagine there was no more money in the village. The khan was very filthy, and the fleas were in such number on the ground that I could not remain in it, but sat under the shade of the outer wall, in a small terrace, in one corner of which was a little fireplace where the attendant on the khan is usually engaged in making coffee from daylight to evening.

We soon received our little cups, and were suddenly refreshed. It is astonishing what effect the smallest portion of the strong coffee made by the Arabs has; no greater stimulus is required in the longest and most arduous journeys. It is universal throughout the East, but more used by the Arabs of the Desert than by any other class; they will often go without food for twenty-four hours if they can but have recourse to the little dram of coffee, which, from the small compass in which they carry the apparatus, and the readiness with which it is made, they can always command. I can vouch for

both its strengthening and exhilarating effect; it answers these purposes better than I can conceive it possible a dram of spirits could do to those who indulge in it. Our breakfast consisted of very good cakes and fresh milk, with exceedingly fine dates; my clothes and saddle-bags were hung out to dry while we rested, and in about two hours we set off once more. It was now extremely hot, and there was not even a blade of grass to relieve the intense glare of the plain. The eye was as usual cheated with the appearance of water.

About two hours from Khan el Awazee, there is a narrow stream, the sides of which are green; we found here three men lying asleep upon a bridge that crossed it; we passed them, and dismounted at the opposite side to drink and wash. The water was low, and we were sitting close to its edge, not able to see what was going on above the bank, when I heard some voices in dispute, and in jumping up perceived the three sleepers, who had evidently had one eye awake, in difference about the appropriation of our mules: they had fastened their cloaks and matchlocks on them, and were just going to

jump into the saddles, when I gave the alarm, and we forthwith flew to the rescue. My Arab protector rushed up to one of the men, pulled him rather roughly away, and, throwing his cloak upon the ground, called out to me "Mount and be off," and I lost no time in getting into my seat. One of the strangers called out to his comrades, "El oalad!" (a child!) "desist;" and repeating "Salaam aleikoum," each kissed my guide Abd-ul-Azee, and waved with an air of condescension to me to be off if I pleased.

When some explanation took place, the tallest of the three men, who was a reckless bold-looking fellow, addressed me very good-humouredly, saying, "Don't be afraid; you shall not be robbed, for you are under the protection of an Arab; we will go with you to Hillah, and nobody shall molest you, but we shall rob every one else we meet upon the road. I saw no advantage in making any objection to this arrangement, although I felt little inclination for the life of a highwayman in the Desert, and in case of a struggle I could not very easily preserve a neutrality. On we went, however; and I learnt very soon what I had at once suspected,

that my new friends were the thieves of the night before in the village I had breakfasted in: there was no faith to be placed in men who had so recently forgotten the Arab honour, and abused the hospitality of the poor people who had lodged them; so I kept a jealous eye on their proceedings. They were well armed with hatchets, clubs, and matchlocks, while the tallest wore a sword: one of them was very lame, and his companions begged me to let him ride behind Hassan; I did not like this plan, but, as they were very earnest, I gave permission, and recommended that they should all tie their matchlocks to my mule. They took advantage of my proposal, and, having thus overreached them, I told Hassan to get his animal gradually into a fast trot: we both succeeded in this manœuvre, and in half an hour, in spite of their shouting and running, we got completely away from them.

About two in the day we arrived at the "Khan el Beer," and behind a mound near the village, after some dispute upon the subject, dismounted our lame robber, and left him in charge of the arms we had borne off. We

did not enter this khan, which had nothing inviting in it, but rode on for Secunderia, about three hours further. On the road we met several travellers, who saluted us with the "salaam aleikoum," and passed quickly on.

We passed over many loose and broken bricks, and occasionally mounds that spoke of the sites of former cities; they must have been both numerous and large, and must have rendered the island fertile and populous, which is now miserably waste and desolate.

It was just five o'clock when we entered the khan of Secunderia. This was very neat and clean, and a few travellers were lounging on the terrace round its outer wall. It was a large square with a very high wall, having one strong gate to enter by. In the middle of the square were two platforms divided by a narrow passage; they were about four feet high, built of bricks well plastered over with white cement. On one of them was a sentry-box-looking machine for the faithful to bow down to, when at their prayers. It was the Kebla, and indicated the direction of Mecca. Round the court were an amazing number

of recesses, the resting-places of travellers, and at the angles were inner courts where the beasts of burthen and their loads were lodged.

I spread my carpet on the outer terrace, and was sipping my coffee, when a cloud of dust on the road towards Babylon roused all the loungers of the khan into activity. It was the young sheikh of the Azael Arabs, who had just been appointed to the chieftainship of the tribe in room of his father, who had grown too old to be of any use, and had been consequently superseded by the Pasha of Bagdad, obliged in fact to abdicate in favour of his son: a very necessary measure when the hereditary sheikh loses the energy requisite to maintain authority over so wild a crew.

The first of the party that made his *entrée* puzzled me very much. He rode upon a mule laden with bags, over which was thrown a very handsome Persian carpet. He was dressed in the costume of an Arab merchant, and was so fair that I took him for an European. He had a broad florid face, and a pair of light blue eyes, with auburn beard and moustaches.

He winked and nodded to me as he rode past in rather a familiar manner. When he had dismounted and lodged his baggage, he had, as he walked about, still more the air of a countryman; and observing that, notwithstanding his winks and nods, he rather avoided me, I had begun to frame a mystery regarding him, to the solution of which I looked forward with some interest.

At length the main body, consisting of about three hundred horsemen, drew near; the young sheikh, accompanied by his treasurer, in the midst of them. They were all well-mounted, and the chief rode a grey mare, the most beautiful creature I ever beheld; she was lightly bitted, and had on an uncommonly small saddle, not unlike an English hussar saddle, covered with purple velvet. The horsemen were completely armed, and spread over the plain, winding and galloping their active horses, and tilting at each other with their spears. It was perfectly an Arabian scene; all was desert around, and nothing could be more wild or picturesque than the groups formed in the little khan of Secunderia, when

in a moment from the most perfect quiet all was noise and uproar, the jingle of arms, neighing of horses, and shouting of the riders.

After a cup of coffee or two, the sheikh perceiving my mules, and hearing they belonged to a Frank, for the Arabs soon found me out, sent to beg that I would visit him. I was not long in obeying, and, after the first salutations, sat down on a corner of his carpet, and drank the never-failing cup of coffee. He was a very intelligent-looking mild young man; his dress was little better than that of the commonest of his attendants; but there was much grace in his manners, and great natural politeness in his way of putting questions to me and managing the conversation. "You are welcome," said he; "I suppose you are on your way to Babel; all your countrymen go there." I replied that I was "Good! and you will pray at the Tower of Nimrod — Birz-el-Nimrood; it is a long way from Frangistan." His attendants, particularly the old treasurer, smiled and hummed in approbation of what he said. "Are you not armed?" asked the sheikh, observing that I was without a

sword. "No," I replied, "I trust for protection to the Arab who accompanies me." "Wullah!" cried the chief; while the treasurer exclaimed, "God is great, wonderful! and the Arabs are not to be distrusted."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of my fair friend, who jumped upon the terrace, and squatted down behind me, leaning with his back against the wall. All were immediately silent, as if in expectation of something; I was not long in suspense. Placing his hand behind his ears, and pushing his turban a little off his forehead, he commenced the most discordant yell I ever heard, to which every one listened with delight; it took me so completely by surprise that I had some difficulty to preserve good manners. The song, for it must, I fancy, be so called, appeared to be extempore, and celebrated the elevation of the young sheikh; the words were ingeniously transposed throughout the composition, but the matter always seemed the same: the burthen ran, that it was a glorious day for Secunderia, "the sheikh comes here to-day, to-day, to-day, ilioum, ilioum, ilioum!"

At length he worked himself to such a pitch, that I feared he would break a blood-vessel. He shook from head to foot, his eyes seemed starting from their sockets; the hands, being still behind his ears, fairly knocked off his turban, while his throat was swelled to a fearful degree. I never can forget the awful shake of the last "ilioum!" it had an amazing effect upon the whole party. "Good, good, wonderful! God is great!" cried every one; this was but encouragement to the singer to strain away. On he shouted, till the treasurer, fairly conquered, tore a handsome shawl from his own head, and threw it in ecstasy at the feet of the singer, calling in rapture, "Cease, cease, I can stand no more." From a different feeling, my relief at the conclusion was even greater than that experienced by the khasnadar; a thousand knife-grinders could not so have set my teeth on edge. A great crowd had collected round us during the exhibition, which no one had had leisure to notice. When it was over, however, they stepped forward one by one, to do homage to the chief. He rose and embraced

each, while the subject in a graceful manner kissed his shoulders.

Among the new arrivals at his divan were my three companions the thieves. I was a little startled at seeing them once again, not quite liking to pass the night in their society, for I had learned from the treasurer that the sheikh and his party were not to remain in the khan beyond another hour. A few Persians had arrived also, on their way to Meshed Ali, with a corpse; it being a common thing to bury the bodies of the faithful of the Sheeah sect in that sacred place. We had indeed a most motley group.

I rose to retire, when the treasurer, whispering to Hassan, asked if I was not afraid to continue my journey alone; saying with a wink, "Tell him he will be robbed." Hassan was proof however, and recommended me to hold out. I declared that I placed implicit trust in the Arabs. He now, however, had his own interests to promote; and shaking his head said, "That is all very fine, but take an escort from the sheikh;" and then creeping closer to me, said in my ears, "it will only cost you a hundred

dollars." I laughed, and, pointing to my mules, replied, "That is ten times more than all my property is worth; thank you, it will cost me less to be robbed." "Wonderful!" said he, "Frangies must have their own way." "What have you got in your bags?" said an old man, who, from his anxiety to join in the conversation, was probably destined to command my proposed escort. "They are empty," was my answer, "and meant to bring back bricks from Babel." "Wullah! Billah!" cried every one who heard, for our conversation had now become more general.

If they doubted my sanity before, when I preferred the chance of being robbed to purchasing protection, they seemed perfectly convinced that I was out of my senses now. The old treasurer gazed at me in silence, and I thought with some compassion too; but made no attempt to continue the conversation, and I was nothing loth to retire from the presence.

I withdrew to another terrace, where very soon Hassan, Abd-ul-Azee, Abdullah, and myself, were employed in the despatch of a large bowl of rice and milk, around which we

squatted, a grotesque quartette; a Frank, an Egyptian, an Arab, and a Persian, which I now learnt my muleteer was. We were soon joined by a party of horse-dealers, one of whom had been in Bombay: perceiving that I was a stranger, he accosted me in Hindoostanee, and took occasion to boast to those around him of his great travels, and fairly astonished the natives by describing the carriages and houses of the Frangies in India, and above all the elephants.

It was quite dark, and the traveller's drowsy tale soon sent me to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

The Khan deserted.—Night on the Terraces.—The light-coloured Singer.—The Thieves again.—Once more installed as a companion of Robbers.—Arab Ferocity.—Travellers in Danger.—Khan of Mahewil.—Garden of Dates and Pomegranates.—Breakfast.—Strolling Mountebanks.—The Thieves' success.—The Mujellibie.—Approach to Babylon.—Preparations for entering Hillah.—Pleasant Retreat.—Courteous Gardener.—Perplexing Conversation.—Breadth of the Euphrates.—Governor of Hillah and his Court.—Female Water-carriers.—Unconscious betrayal of myself as a Frank.—My Letters of Introduction.—A Reverend Scribe.

WHEN I awoke, Secunderia was once more a desert. The sheikh and his party had departed for Bagdad; the horse-dealers had taken advantage of the escort, and had gone also. I moved to the interior of the khan, of which my party became the only occupants; the dead body and its escort being in an open space in the centre of the village. I was glad to miss the thieves, who were, I doubt not, on a profitable pursuit among the huts of the villagers.

The large door of the khan had two tremendous bolts to it, which we fastened; and, spreading our carpets on one of the terraces in the centre, passed a cool night beneath as bright a moon and clear a sky as I ever beheld. Those who are unable to sleep with a light in their room, will know what it is to have a full moon immediately over head when resting in the open air. It matters little, however, what obstacles a traveller over the desert may meet, they never can deprive him of sleep; for that will come, even at times when it would be more prudent that he should remain awake.

I heard from Hassan, who had made the acquaintance of the light-coloured singer, that he was a native of Moussole on the Tigris, the neighbourhood of which the Arabs now call "Ninuwah;" a strong corroboration of the identity of the mounds around with antient Nineveh. The birth-place of the follower of the young sheikh is near the site of that celebrated city, which seems to be fertile in gentlemen of the profession of the one I am writing about. He had an air of effeminacy about him, that, as I saw him nearer, became absolutely disgusting,

and seemed little fit for the scene in which I met him. His beard was dyed to an auburn colour, his hands and feet were stained pink, in the manner of Eastern women. I cannot more than hint at the other office he filled about his employer's person.

May 7th. — I meant to have started some hours before daylight, but sleep had so fastened on myself and my party, that it was just beginning to dawn when we mounted our mules and rode out of the khan; I did not observe the thieves, and the party that conducted the corpse to Meshed Ali had long ago set forth.

We had not been an hour on the road, however, when once more we were joined by my persevering fellow-travellers. They were lying on the ground with their heads under cover of the low shrubs that are common throughout the desert. They now formed a party of four, having recruited a very worthy member at Secunderia; and sprung up so hastily on hearing the tramp of the mules, that they must have been on the look-out for a prize. They approached me with smiles, and reassured me of their friendship; while one of them jingled a

leathern purse that seemed full of piastres, and said laughing, "This is all the beggarly fellows had;" and then told with great glee the manner in which they had frightened the protectors of the dead body, and obtained from them one hundred piastres to save it from plunder, for they did not scruple to levy contributions on the dead as well as on the living.

I was once more, therefore, installed as a companion of a band of robbers. There were no less than eight people with the corpse, armed up to the throat; yet, although double the number of the rogues, they did not venture to defend themselves. It is a serious matter indeed to come to blows with any of a tribe of Bedouins: the law of revenge is sure and terrible; and, though the attacking party may be conquered at the time, the death of one of them would entail certain destruction on those who might be bold enough to resist the plunder of their property and persons.

A short time before I arrived at Bagdad, a party of Arabs, consisting of five or six, entered the town in broad day for the avowed purpose of retaliating on some unhappy people who in

a journey had shown more valour than discretion: they found the house, and entering put the whole family to death; then, rushing out with shouts of triumph, displayed their bloody weapons in the crowded streets, and passed unmolested to their tents.

The thieves had set out a little before the Persian procession, and had stopped it not very far from the khan. As some hours had now passed, however, we were not likely to overtake them; there was no alternative but to make the most of the company we had taken up with, and proceed in good humour together.

A little beyond Secunderia we saw a mound of loose bricks, similar to those we passed before, but larger, and pointing more to our approach to Babylon. We had not long passed it when the keen eyes of my banditti observed some travellers rising on the horizon as vessels do at sea. As we drew nearer, the principal among them turned to me and said, with more consideration than I expected, "We will rob these people, but you would not, perhaps, care to witness it; so peace be to you!" They dropped behind in order to way-lay them, and

left us to continue our journey; we met the victims in less than a quarter of an hour, they were of equal number with the thieves, and armed with swords and matchlocks, fine stout-looking men, and I was in hopes that each of my friends would catch a Tartar. On meeting, they accosted us, and, asking where we had come from, hoped we had been unmolested; then, in a most courteous manner, looking a little suspiciously at us, "Are there any Arabs on the road?" they continued. They were not Bedouin Arabs themselves, but natives of some town on the Euphrates, bound for Bagdad. They must have seen the Persians in the morning, and learnt from them that they had been robbed.

I thought it would be playing false to my companions to warn them directly what they were to expect, but compromised the matter by bidding them look a-head: the thieves were just visible; they saw them, and, seeming to understand, altered their course and stood in such a manner as to avoid any attack from the party they had noticed. The Arabs, however, were not to be out-manœuvred, and

changed their direction accordingly. I watched for some time, in hopes to see a little tournament; but my guide declared it was of no use to wait, for they would not fight.

I pushed on, and in an hour more reached the khan of Mahewil. On entering the village we had a little entertainment in a race among the women to intercept us; they were the least feminine dames I had ever seen, and, drawing up their long blue shifts, strode along at a most awful rate: the baskets they bore on their heads announced a peaceable intention, or I should have been under some apprehension.

I entered a little garden of date-trees and pomegranates beyond the khan, preferring the shelter I found among them, to the dirty resting-place the latter afforded. There was a stream not far from the garden, and the pomegranate-trees were thick with their lively scarlet blossoms. I soon had an admirable breakfast of butter-milk and bread, which the tramping shepherdesses had brought to sell. There was much difficulty in drinking the milk at first, for it was contained in small skins so dirty, that,

accustomed as I am to every description of fare and manner of serving it, I could not bring myself to apply them to my lips. Each had exactly the appearance of a haggis, and certainly I was not over nice in waiting until a wooden bowl could be brought to accommodate me: a very small sum was sufficient for our breakfast, and we set forth once more.

A little beyond the river that runs by this village, and which is of a good breadth, with a bridge over it, are some narrow defiles, and the intervals between them are thick with shrubs. Emerging from one of them, I met the most motley and extraordinary group of human beings possible to conceive; there was a loud laugh among them, and in an instant every one seemed afflicted with the most terrible deformity: there were thirty or forty, men, women, and children; some running nearly naked by the side of asses, on which others were riding in the most ludicrous attitudes. Some men were driving animals with loud shouts, apparently laden with all the paraphernalia of mountebanks; while the women, who were riding, had children hanging about them,

some on their shoulders, some at their breasts, and others sitting in front of them, making the most hideous faces I ever saw.

My first impression was that the few leading persons were idiots; but when another, and another came, I could not resist laughing with them; the general shout for buckshish, with their varying grimaces, betrayed them clearly enough; they were indeed mountebanks, conjurers, singers, dancers, and I know not what: they had been exhibiting at Hillah, and were on their way to Bagdad, to continue their calling there. "Then came each actor on his ass;" and after a few speeches, which I did not understand, but which drew merriment from those who did, they passed on. They were to rest at the village of Secunderia that night, and my companions all regretted that it had not so fallen out that we also were to spend the night there. Their appearance was so far from promising, that I did not in the least lament the loss of the amusement they might have given to ears and eyes more accustomed than mine to such sights and such sounds.

Again my companions the thieves overtook

me, and exhibited the result of their meeting with the four travellers I have mentioned: they robbed them of forty piastres, which they had delivered quietly enough; and, leaving me soon after our falling in with the strollers, I saw them no more. Their movements in the rear of that miserable gang were very suspicious, however; and I have little doubt they were on the look-out for some poor stragglers of the crew.

Soon after this interview we came again into an uninterrupted plain, from which arose, at a great distance on our right hand, a very respectable-looking hill, which I should never have suspected to have been anything else but for the mounds of different sizes that were also, as we advanced, beginning to be apparent: on the summits of one or two of them were small mosques dedicated to particular saints; the most conspicuous to "Amran-ibn-Ali—Amran the son of Ali," and another to "Suleiman the son of David." We constantly passed over loose and broken bricks, and, as we drew nearer to the dark heap that we had first perceived, saw that it was also a collection of fallen build-

ings; it does not the less, however, deserve the name of a hill. It was the "Mujellibie," and we were now, without a doubt, within the verge of Babylon.

It was drawing towards the evening, and I resolved to abandon the inspection of the ruins to another day, and make all haste to the town that has arisen from them. I am so little of an antiquary, and so far from acute in research, that I am too happy, even where there is room for a difference of opinion, to adopt the conclusions of the learned and laborious travellers that have gone before me; I could not do more, therefore, than give utterance to my feelings on finding myself a lone and indeed weary traveller in a broad desert which once was so peopled, and so wealthy, as to be a marvel even now, after the lapse of so many ages.

I was nearly two hours' journey yet from Hillah, and was well advanced within the ancient limits of the city. The date-trees on the shores of the Euphrates were just rising to view; besides, everywhere was a waste of sand, and the hummocks that the ruins form were

absolutely painful to look at. My attendants, who had frequently enough travelled over the "Desolation," the "Astonishment" of Babylon, were most anxious to finish their journey, and hurried my poor mules on: they too had often, I fancy, made the pilgrimage, for they seemed to know a harbour was at hand, and gained fresh spirit as we advanced.

We at length reached the river, and, continuing for some time down its left bank, about five in the afternoon arrived at a garden close to the town; there was a hole in the wall through which I crept that I might sit by a little reservoir of water I perceived within it, and, refreshing myself, make some arrangement of my dress for a more respectable entrance. I despatched Hassan into Hillah, that he might bring me a report of the place, and try to discover a clean spot to rest in.

It is a matter of some consideration to a European, however inured he may be to the strange vicissitudes of Oriental travelling, to decide upon his operations on first arriving at the town he has been toiling anxiously all day to reach. I felt not unlike some of the wandering youths

of the Arabian Nights, as I sat by my pool of water awaiting my Arab messenger. I saw no person to interrupt my meditations but the gardener, who, although he observed me perform my ablutions, kept away, supposing that, as a good Mussulman, I should require time on their completion to make my bows towards Mecca. At length he approached, and, uttering "Salaam aleikoum!" begged me to move to a better part of the garden. I followed him to a small green spot in the midst of a cluster of pomegranate-trees, by which ran a stream through a little canal that wandered in every direction round the garden. It was the hour for watering the plants, and he had cut the dam, when he gave me the greeting by the side of the reservoir. I threw myself down on the grass, and was delighted, when my host disappeared, to find myself quite alone.

The sun was low, the air was cool. One of the most happy sensations imaginable is the change that comes over the mind in such a place after an escape from the Desert. I was not long left to myself, for the gardener returned with a quantity of apricots, — there

were many apricot-trees in the garden,—and throwing them in my lap, desired me to eat. He first took one himself, however, as well to encourage me, as to remove any doubts I might have conceived of their safety. I never met an uncivil gardener in my life, and the efforts of this one to make me comfortable because I was a stranger, showed, as I have seen it observed, that the occupation of cultivating the soil is at all times the promoter of benevolent actions, for he must have seen also that I had but little the air of a true believer.

The garden I soon found, from its neighbourhood to the town, was a place of resort for the loungers; and my party had increased before the return of Hassan to six, by an addition of four very well dressed Turks, who came to smoke away an hour in the spot of which I had already possession. Conversation, I fancy, never entered into their contemplation; nor probably would they have opened their lips but to call for their pipes, if their curiosity had not been moved by my appearance. I had to undergo, therefore, a cross-examination, and

to stammer out answers in most unintelligible Arabic, for their knowledge of the language being on a par with mine, my indifferently-pronounced words gave them but little information.

We were relieved at last from our confusion by the arrival of my messenger, who gave me but little promise of Hillah. I left my seat, and quitting the garden passed a portion of the town, to the banks of the river, which flows through the modern, as it did through the ancient city. I crossed by a bridge of boats to the west side, which was broad and firm, over which I measured one hundred and seventy paces, giving to the breadth of the Euphrates more than four hundred feet.

The bridge was naturally a great thoroughfare, and I passed it in company with many on horseback and on foot: some were lounging upon it to enjoy the cool air; and on each side were coffee-houses, with crowds sitting in them smoking the narguileh, and sipping from the little cup of coffee. The reach of the river below the bridge reflected the rays of the setting sun, which had just turned everything

to gold, and the long groves of date-trees really glittered in the bosom of the stream. There were vessels of water on each side of the bridge, with brass saucers by their sides for travellers to drink from; in the East the misery of thirst is so well known that this consideration is scarcely ever forgotten.

I observed on my right hand a group of "grave and reverend signiors" sitting in a circle on a raised platform near the bank of the river. This was the governor of the city and his court. Behind them was the high wall of his house, which had something of the air of a fort, and at latticed windows near the top of the building sat, perhaps, the fair dames of his seraglio to overlook the evening scene. I saw them not, but it is as well to suppose that they were there,—and so the usual picture of an Oriental sunset in the neighbourhood of a town will be complete, with the addition, however, of the women that I did see, who came in crowds to the river's bank to draw water for their houses. They carry the water in skins at their backs, which are so heavy when full that they cannot raise them from the ground.

They draw them with difficulty from the stream, and range them in a row by its side; then, lying down upon them, place the straps over their shoulders, and with the aid of others, who pull them by the hands, they get upon their feet, and, bent double with the weight, hobble off, giving the same help before they go, however, to those who had, unloaded, assisted them.

It is amusing enough to see this pulling system carried on continually, as if there was no fun in it, with the greatest gravity and decorum, and all the wise men of the city contemplating it without moving a muscle. When I reached the coffee-house, close to which was a line of damsels seesawing to get upon their legs,—for several efforts are sometimes necessary,—I forgot the serious demeanour I should have carried beneath the turban I wore, and burst into a loud laugh. I was at once betrayed as a stranger, and, followed by five or six Jews, entered the house and called for a cup of coffee. These assiduous gentlemen, who are in great number in Hillah, immediately assailed me to purchase antiques, and drew forth little bags containing coins and

stones, which they seemed to have ready always about them.

On my turning them over with some curiosity, they thought they had found a ready purchaser, and despatched one of the party, unperceived by me, to get more. I was dismayed when I beheld him approach with a heavy bag at his back, and then found that I had not only exposed my being a Frank,—for I confess that from the humble guise in which I travelled I was anxious to pass unobserved,—but that I had become a joke to the loungers in the khan, who, expecting some diversion from the arrival of the country clown, had drawn closely round me, and with broad grins were awaiting the developement of the scene. I dropped the curtain, however, and refused to give any more entertainment. The Jews, after a little further display of their antiquities, dropped off, and left me to sip my coffee in some quiet.

I had brought three letters with me,—one to the governor, and the remaining two to private residents in the town; one was a Turk, the other an Arab. I determined to try the hospitality of the last in the first instance, and, plac-

ing them in the hand of the host of the khan, begged him to read the directions. This seemed a little beyond his power, and after for some time turning them over in the puzzled manner of Tony Lumpkin, with a sleight of hand he whisked the largest into his breast, and returned me the two smaller ones, shuffling them about that I might not detect the trick, and declared that he knew nothing of the writing. I suspect the rogue could read however, for he had chosen the very letter he wished, the one to the governor, and, upon the strength of possessing my firmaun, immediately asked me for a cup of coffee nearly the value of all that he had in his shop. I had some difficulty to recover my letter quietly, and succeeded only on threatening to go at once and denounce him to the governor. I left him the smallest sum I could with decency pay, and set out in pursuit of one of the scribes so conveniently stationed in all thoroughfares throughout Eastern cities. Not to be able to read is by no means discreditable in this country; indeed the Arabs of the Desert, and the Turks, leave this acquirement entirely to the dealers and the moolvees.

I at length reached the bench of a reverend old gentleman, who was paring his last pen for the day. He had a pair of spectacles on the tip of his nose, a most respectable white beard reaching nearly to his breast. He was squatted on a board, and before him lay a small wooden box in which were packed his tools. He was so grave a person, that he seemed well calculated to be the depositary, as I dare say he is, of all the secrets in his part of the town, which was indeed the most populous. He read the directions of my letters, which was all that I asked him to do, and showed not the least curiosity to know their contents; indeed, scarcely looked at me. In the performance of his office he was a perfect automaton, and would, I am sure, with the greatest gravity have accomplished such a letter as the schoolmaster did for Tom Pipes, though indeed such high-flown compositions would be wasted on the fair of the East, who at least have this advantage over their more accomplished sisters of the West,—that the exposure of their writing-desks can cause no discovery, nor is the sedate court of a Cazi likely to be convulsed with laughter at the raptures of a dying swain.

CHAPTER XIII.

Welcome to Hillah.—Modern use of the bricks of Babylon.—My Host's house.—The Hostess.—"Modern Antiques."—Supper.—Baffled curiosity.—Custom of sleeping on the roofs of houses.—Ludicrous morning scene.—Excursion to the Tower of Babel.—Misery of Eastern cities.—Desolation of Babylon.—The walls.—The tower.—Advantage of travelling without retinue.—A mystery.—Hassan's superstitious fear.—Unpleasant companions.—Appeal to my gallantry.—Return to Hillah.

I WAITED until my messenger should return from the Arab to whom one of my letters was addressed, in the neighbourhood of the principal bazar, which, as is the case in all large cities, was covered in. It was now, however, becoming empty, for little dealing goes on in any mart beyond sunset. The cook-shops were the only ones still remaining open.

In a short time a remarkably good-looking young man, dressed in the common dress of the Arabs, approached me smiling, with my letter open in his hand. He had been to have it read

by my old man, who had no doubt merely retained his curiosity, certain that it would be a sealed book until he had broken the spell. The Arab welcomed me to Hillah, and desired Hassan, without any reference to me, to send my bags immediately to his house, whither I accompanied him. This was at no great distance, in a very narrow street, the entrance to which was stopped on our reaching it by an ass, whose cargo was a little too broad for the passage. In pushing him out of the way, I observed that he was laden with bricks. They were of the remains of Babylon! and had been brought in to repair my host's house, from the mound near the bank of the river that passes for the ruins of the hanging gardens.

The town of Hillah, as is well known, is built entirely of these bricks; and although a degenerate daughter of the parent from whom she has sprung, is in consequence a better ordered city than any I have seen in this part of the East. The bricks collected in the court of the Arab's house were all quite perfect; and, even had they not been hallowed by ages, I should have been struck with them, from their admir-

able firmness and precise construction. They all bore the impression of the arrow-headed character which is found upon nearly every brick dug from the ruins of Babylon, and which has defied, as it will probably continue to do, all attempts to decipher it.

My host's house is a fair specimen of the second class of buildings in the town. On one side of a small court, in which stands a large tree, is a recess, having a carpet and cushions. At the edge of this I kicked off my shoes, and threw myself with great joy on one of the cushions. On one side of me was a little door which led into the store-room, and on the other hung the arms of the Arab; opposite was the cooking-place, where the pots were already arranged for the preparation of our supper: a kid had been doomed to bleed, and was on the point of being dressed, although our arrival could scarcely have been known a quarter of an hour. A female voice from the roof of the adjoining house called out that she was coming to make ready.

This was a signal for us to take flight. We were not to be gratified with a view of the

hostess; so we crept up a sort of ladder which was meant for a staircase to the roof above the recess, and found a carpet already spread, where we were to sup "*al fresco.*" We whiled away the time in drinking coffee and smoking, talking about Babel, and turning over specimens of cut stones and coins that were said to have been found in its ruins: the Jews, who are at all times skilful, have found the advantage of carrying on such a trade, and naturally enough have tried to impose fictitious antiques upon the travellers who, more anxious to collect than to select, give them good encouragement by the facility with which they are duped.

My host, who was acquainted with one or two European residents at Bagdad, and had been employed in buying such things, had learnt to discriminate, and pointed out to me the difference between the really old specimens and the imitations of the present day. Had I been disposed to form a museum, I should have been a most easy victim, for I thought the false ones the best of the two; I made, however, but few acquisitions.

At length arrived our long looked for supper. On its approach our landlord skipped on one

side, and, like a harlequin, shook off the dress he had worn until now, and as suddenly equipped himself in another, which seemed to be quite new. He had put on his best to do honour to his hospitality.

We quickly performed our ablutions, and seated ourselves in a circle round the pilao. The moon was up and gave a pleasant light. I had little trouble, however, to choose for myself, for the kindness of my entertainer was persevering; whenever my labours ceased, he threw me over a piece of kid that he had selected and kneaded up in rice with his fingers "*à l'Arabe.*"

A person who, as I am forced to do, lives on the hospitality of the land, must submit to many modes at first a little indigestible: such training would soon cure a fastidious traveller of his daintiness; but there is a little danger of falling into the other extreme, for there is something so agreeable in a warm climate in the freedom from restraint, that I fear I shall scarcely be able again to sit in a chair, and undergo the precise method of feeding myself through the medium of knives and forks. All, even to the muleteer,

partook of the same fare, and dipped into the same bowl; and pretty splashing and tearing we made of it.

The usual smoking and the incessant coffee followed our meal, which did great credit to the powers of the fair *artiste*,' for I heard from Hassan that she was esteemed a great beauty, as indeed all women of a certain rank may be, with little danger of the illusion being dissipated. She was so closely veiled, even while cooking below, that, notwithstanding the constant peeps I took over the wall into the court, I could not even catch a glance of her eye; the circumstance of strangers being in any part of the house is sufficient to make the women cover themselves as closely as if they were abroad in the town. I must confess there is something particularly tantalizing in this custom. Possibly the removal of the veil would but disclose a face that were as well constantly concealed; yet to be near one that bears the reputation of great beauty, to see her glide about—a ghost in her shroud, to see her approach, recede, nay, sometimes place a pipe at your feet, and all under

that mysterious drapery, is the most provoking trial that can be inflicted upon a traveller.

I was not this evening at any rate doomed to have my curiosity satisfied. My carpet was spread, and with the brightest stars overhead I was soon stretched upon it. Every family slept, as at Bagdad, on the roof of the house: the quarter of the town I was in was so close that I could hear the breathing of my neighbours most distinctly; and occasional peals from the surrounding noses made the loudest sound that in a very short time was to be heard through Hillah.

Daylight presented a most ludicrous scene. The walls round the roofs of the houses were so low that the whole town appeared to be sleeping on one large stage; and, whichever way I turned, I beheld groups with ridiculous gestures rousing themselves from sleep: so great a variety in so common a recreation as yawning and stretching, perfectly confounded me. If I had flown over the town in a balloon, I could not have caught a better view of its population than I did from my own dormitory.

My observation was disturbed by the announcement of my mules, and I was soon on my way to the Tower of Nimrod, as that which has been styled by travellers the Tower of Babel is called by the Arabs "Birz-el-Nimrood:" the way lay through the southern gate of the city, which leads to the sacred places of Meschehed Ali, and Meschehed Houssein.

In Hillah, as in other cities, marks of misery and ruin are to be found within the walls. In all towns that I have seen, there is a large tract between the habitable part and the outer gate, either totally abandoned or peopled by beggars and lepers, who creep from the mounds and fragments of buildings like the ghosts of those who formerly dwelt in them. As the towns have sunk through poverty or war, or been depopulated by plague, the survivors have drawn together, and, gathering into a smaller compass, left the cities to crumble to dust before their eyes: the Mahometans meddle not with the work of destiny; and the Christians and the Jews are too poor to interfere, or too apprehensive to show that they have wealth. A few trees, with

here and there a tomb, add to the forlorn appearance of this part of Hillah.

On leaving the gate, I found that I could not stand directly across to the tower, which, like a rock above the sea, rose in the midst of a waste of water. The river had risen and had met the waters of the lake. I continued for some time parallel to the river, resolved upon reaching the tower, by rounding, if possible, the ocean that divided me from it. How desolate was Babylon! My miserable party—two riders and a guide on foot—were all that moved upon its site, excepting here and there the water-birds that flapped their wings over the lake.

I reached at length a long ridge of sand that ran from the river-side nearly to the mound on which stood the tower; it was fifteen or twenty feet above the plain, and I was able to ride upon it. In some parts it formed a double bank with a shallow hollow between. I could perceive nothing beyond it to the southward: it may be six or seven miles from the town, for I had been two hours on the journey; and

though no antiquary, as I have said, I determined in my mind that I was passing along the walls of Babylon. Many fragments of bricks were lying among the sand, some marked with the character I noticed in Hillah. All was barren around; although at some distance, where the waters were shallowest, I could see the grass peeping above them. By the walls I had found a dry road to the base of the huge shapeless mound on which the tower is placed, its circumference is estimated at a little more than seven hundred yards: a narrow way divided it from a still larger and more irregular heap, upon the side of which stood, facing the tower, a small mosque. If the dervishes to whom these memorials are erected, lived on the spots where the tombs now stand that are to be seen over the remains of Babylon, they selected well for the abandonment of the world; more forlorn spots could scarcely be found, for, in the great Desert even, there is verdure and flower; here all is utter misery.

On the height of the first mound stands a well-built tower, of something less than forty feet high. Such an erection in modern days

would excite admiration for its workmanship; with what astonishment must it be viewed in the supposition that its age exceeds four thousand years! Huge heaps of brick lie about, melted into solid masses, as if by the action of fire; and the whole mound on which the pillar stands is covered with fragments of well-baked bricks: and this is the Temple of Belus, it is said, or the Tower of Babel. At any rate, be it what it may, it stands on the plain of Shinar, where Babylon once stood; and most completely, as my eyes wandered over the scene of desolation, did I feel the truth of the fulfilment of the judgments pronounced against her,—yes, "Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished."

I had plenty of broken bricks to choose from, for Hassan, like a true page, adopts the pursuits of his master upon all occasions, and in this one — of gathering from the *débris* of Babylon — he was active and well informed. Most European travellers move through the East so well attended by guides, servants, and escort, that I think they must lose much of the pleasure for which they go. I would

not, in such scenes as these I am now endeavouring to describe, have a herd of mercenary followers to haunt me wherever I roam, for all the honour and glory that may attend prancing into a town in the midst of them. In such solitary regions they would be terribly out of place.

The tower, and all about it, have been sufficiently described by many better qualified to do so than myself; it will be some novelty too, to speak of Babylon and conjecture nothing.

On leaving the foundation of the tower, I clambered up the opposite heap, to seek shelter in the porch of the little tomb upon it, for the sun was excessively hot: there was a seat within it, on which stood a vessel of water, and I was surprised to find that the sides of it were wet, as if some person had but that instant drunk from it. Here was, at any rate, something to excite a curious traveller. My muleteer had not ascended either height, but had been quietly smoking his narguil below, and my servant had never quitted my side: I entered the inner chamber where lay the tomb, but not a being was within it; a few rags lay

about that might have belonged to the drapery that originally covered it; it had now every appearance of neglect. The examination of it but increased the mystery; and, with our sticks in our hands, we set out to search the neighbourhood.

The mound, which was entirely of ruined buildings buried in sand, was broken into many hollows and pits. Into some of these we descended; but, disappointed, in about a quarter of an hour returned to the tomb, when lo! the water vessel was empty! I never can forget the look of poor Hassan. He grew as pale as one of his complexion could do, and the large drops of perspiration absolutely stood upon his face: we hung over the edge of the mound, and I sent him down to the bottom to explore, while I renewed the search behind the building; it was all in vain, we could find no clue to the mysterious water-drinker. There, at a distance, sat the muleteer where he had always sat, with the bridles in one hand, and the pipe in the other.

"Come away," at length Hassan exclaimed; "it is a Ghol; we must not stay here, an evil

spirit possesses the place. Istogh-fur-Allah! Heaven pardon us! *you* must not sit down in the tomb," laying particular emphasis on the word "you," for his misgivings arose from the probable dislike this demon of the Desert might show for a Christian. I had but little inclination after such an inhospitable freak to remain. My fancies, however, ran upon Bedouins and certain substantial spirits of that description, who were likely to display as little courtesy towards me as any "Ghol" in Babel. With a hasty step I descended to the mules, that I might at any rate secure a retreat, but not a soul was to be seen. I mounted, and turned towards the walls, but little disposed for an adventure, hungry, thirsty, and tired, to pursue my way, as I had come, back to the town of Hillah.

I had scarcely begun to move, when behind the bank towards which I was riding, I saw two formidable spear-heads obtruding themselves into notice in the least agreeable manner; some invisible hands were engaged in thrusting them towards me, to keep up the joke, I imagined, of the spirit of the water-pot. I thought it best to put a bold face upon the matter however, and

unravel the mystery; so, followed by my esquire, I kicked my mule into a canter, and, with my club in my hand, charged the ambuscade of the Saracens. The enemy seemed prepared for this evolution, for, on my reaching the spot beneath which they were crouched, up they jumped, and with a loud shout scared my mule, who, turning suddenly about, exposed her rear to the foe. They took every advantage of this false movement, and poked her in the flanks, while she kicked with all her might. As they were at spear's length, I had little left but to try and get her out of the way for a fresh attack.

My squire at last came to the rescue, and, sounding a parley, gave me an opportunity of surveying my opponents; they were three men and two women, and, although the latter were as Amazonian-looking dames as I would wish to engage with, I was relieved to find some of the gentler sex of the party. The men were stout, good-humoured-looking fellows, and laughed very heartily at the meeting; I laughed too, for company more than from pleasure, and, wishing them peace, endeavoured to escape them. They were resolved to be of the

party however, and, leaving their hiding-place, trotted by our sides. They saw I was anxious to shake off their company, and very soon came to the point.

"Come," said the biggest to me, giving me an appropriate touch on the leg with the butt of his spear, "tumble off, you've had riding enough." "Wullah!" was all the reply I made, and kicked away at the sides of my mule. "The women are tired," he continued; "come off, and let them mount." At this the shortest of the ladies came tripping and smiling to my side. If ever a want of gallantry could be excusable, it would be so, I am certain, in such a situation. The fair dames were not half so tired as I was, and my politeness would most certainly have lost me my steed; so I determined to sit fast. Unwilling to appear quite devoid of the feelings of a knight-errant, I proposed to carry one of the heroines behind me, while Hassan would accommodate the other. This nearly brought matters to a crisis, for the husbands, as if they suspected a plan for an elopement, gave vent to their rage in the most violent abuse, and placing their spears in rest, or ra-

ther balancing them in their hands above their heads, stood ready for a tilt; and, had not the fair causes of the quarrel interposed, I believe I should have fallen on the plains of Babylon, a sacrifice to the honour of two outrageous husbands, whose dames deserved championship as little as any that poor knight was ever hampered with.

Hassan drew his hatchet, and placed himself between me and the enemy; while I brandished my club, and endeavoured to treat. I began now to doubt of the wisdom of having left my arms behind: a pistol might have brought the question to an advantageous issue; however, patience and good-humour often go as far as bullets, and with them I contrived to fight.

We once again trotted on together, till, on skirting at a little distance the flooded part of the plain, my companions hastened towards it to quench their thirst. I did not lose the opportunity, and, urging the mules, gained so much upon them, that at length they gave up the chase, and without further company I arrived in the afternoon at Hillah.

CHAPTER XIV.

My hostess.—Her coquetry.—Successful stratagem.—The lady's beauty.—Visit to the Governor.—An Eastern Dandy.—Curiosity excited by my appearance in Hillah.—Dates.—Banks of the river.—A storm.—Nightly persecution.—My host's kindness.—Population of Hillah.—The Mujillibie.—El Kasr.—An adventure.—Confidence in Arab honour.—Opportune arrival of my Guide.

WHEN I entered my host's door, his wife was cooking in the court with her face uncovered. I was on the point of having my curiosity gratified, when, screaming as if I had been a demon, she whisked suddenly round, and, till an old crone brought her a cloak, remained with her back to the door; while I, who know enough now of the manners of the East never to venture beyond a furtive glance, stood as if the Veiled Prophet himself had bared his fatal brow.

When her charms were sufficiently secure, I

retired to the recess I had occupied on my first arrival, determined to sit there and play at bo-peep with the muffled beauty for the rest of the day. I had ample opportunity of detecting her love of admiration in the little she could display of her graces. She was as accomplished a coquette as ever shot a glance through a veil, and I sat in my corner with the serenity of a bashaw while she played her little airs before me. Her hands and feet were the prettiest possible, and were most delicately tinged with pink, and burthened with rings and bracelets innumerable. The elaborate grace of her action whenever she moved was evidently for my advantage.

Of all women in the world, those of the East understand best how arms should be moved; every position of the arm is a study: but I was too intent upon a plan for seeing her face, to benefit so much by her exertions as I should otherwise have done. I lay down on my cushion, and threw a handkerchief over my face to keep off the flies; in fact, I pretended to be asleep. Twice she tripped by me to the store-room, but most resolutely shrouded; the

third time was fatal. The weather was hot, and I seemed to her to be as unconscious as necessary: gently the cloud began to disappear; then was her black hair plaited and twined carelessly about her head, and she looked wildly, yet timidly round. I was as still as a mouse; down dropped the curtain, and as pretty a brunette was before me as I ever had the good fortune to gaze upon. She stood like a frightened deer, listening lest any person should approach, and find her in such a predicament. On her chin was a flower the shape of a violet, done with antimony into the skin; it was the only mark upon her face, and really did, as it was meant to do, set off her countenance amazingly.

I threw away my victory, however, as wiser generals have done; I could no longer restrain my delight at having triumphed, and, throwing off my handkerchief, jumped up as if from sleep: her horror confounded me; she seized her veil and cloak, huddled them on, and scampered out of the court with the speed of a gazelle. A stranger, and a Christian too, had seen her face; and although it would have

excited the admiration of an anchorite, the possessor, vain as it was possible to be, felt the deepest shame at the discovery. She was in the middling class of life, obliged occasionally to join her servants in household matters, and so risk exposure; yet she had in her own opinion been guilty of the greatest offence a modest woman could commit. To have brought pretty women to that pass was no small merit in the first husbands of the East.

I had done mischief enough in the house, by bringing a blush into the cheeks of my hostess, however unconsciously; so I set out to view what little I could of the town in the daylight that was yet left. I paid a visit to the house of the former governor, to whom one of the letters I brought was directed: it stood on the banks of the river; the water indeed washed its wall, and, but by a narrow causeway, there was no means of reaching the door. He had gone upon a journey, and I was received by one of his principal people, a Turk who had been all his life in Bagdad or Hillah, and spoke not a word of Arabic. The Turks are too proud to learn anything; but it is car-

rying their self-satisfaction a little too far to include their sacred language in the things beneath them, as they seem to do. The Turks, however, attending on the great, carry their contempt for the precepts as far nearly as they do for the language of the Koran.

After a cup of coffee and a few "nods and becks," I left my friend very little edified upon the subject of my visit, which he used every means within his power to fathom. The governor, with his court, was seated where I had observed him last night, and I despatched a polite message by Hassan to ask permission to make my bow. Until his return I squatted by the bank of the river, and followed the example of many I saw about me, in performing my ablutions before I presented myself. He received me politely—a respectable old gentleman; and after a few common-place questions said, if any person in the town was insolent, he would, if I wished, have him bastinadoed. I thanked him for this courtesy, and, making my bow, retired.

Among those about him, was one of the gayest figures I ever met in the East. He was a

perfect Sir Piercie Shafton, as precise in language, and more studied in his dress. His trousers were at least twice as broad as he himself was long, and covered with gold in every possible place; while his vest may have been the best chosen in the Sublime dominions. The Turkish beau, however, shines in his moustache and turban: the curl of the first was the most successful possible, and the latter was arranged in the Bagdad taste, the red cap hanging well over the back of his head, with the long silk tassel nearly down to his shoulders; many folds of spangled white muslin rising from his brows, one above the other, till the topmost "beetled o'er its base." The part of his dress that answers the purpose of a coat, instead of hanging loosely behind him, was so heavily laden with golden embroidery, that had it been clasped in front it would have made an admirable strait-waistcoat; from his waist protruded the richly embossed butts of a brace of Turkish pistols, and his sword was a proper adjunct to the whole. He was, indeed, a most complete picture of the genus to which he belongs, that any country could produce. He rose before I

went out, that he might strut across the bridge and show himself to more advantage. Nothing about a Turkish gentleman is made for walking; and as he minced in his gait, and twisted the ends of his moustaches between his fingers, all seemed inclined to exclaim with me, "What a pity such a thing was made to move!" He thought so himself too; for, elevating his eyebrows, and assuming the most disdainful air, he strove to show that he had nothing in common with the herd among whom he passed: like some bright meteor, he had merely fallen there to excite their wonder. Such fine things, however, must fade; so the coarse multitude at length hid him from my sight.

As I wandered through the town, it became my turn to excite astonishment; as other country towns, Hillah feels a large portion of interest in all that attends a stranger. I was neither Turk, Christian, nor Jew, according to their notions, for a Frank comes under neither of these classes; and my attendant, an Egyptian, was still more incomprehensible.

This neighbourhood is famous for dates, and in all parts of the bazars they hung in clusters

dried on their branches, or stuck in lumps glued together in their own juice.

I gave a small coin to my never-failing Hassan, and desired him to bring me a sample of each while I continued my walk. I expected a handful, but in a short time he overtook me with a load at his back, and a crowd of children at his heels. "*Molto!*" said he, as he displayed his bargain, "this is the country for dates!" It would have taken me a month to consume his cargo. He had untwisted a shawl from his waist, which was now stuffed to a good-sized bag; and, as we pursued our way, I was obliged to lighten his burthen by including our little followers in the feast. This made me so popular, that I soon had collected all the boys of the town, and began to acquire through every street that I passed some of that sort of celebrity which attaches to a mountebank in my own country. The clamour increased with the throng, and even the women were attracted to their doors, and peeped and tittered at the wonderful stranger. I am certain that in the days of Haroun the Caliph, I should have cut a figure in the "Arabian Nights." The men who sat at

their porches muttered sometimes "God is great!" and sometimes ejaculated an experimental "Salaam aleikoum!" as if to judge by my answer what manner of man I was.

Hillah, like most Oriental towns, is hard to thread. I wandered through narrow and dark streets for some time in pursuit of the river, for, although I had many guides, I did not like to trust them, and their scheme was more to follow than to lead. I at length found the stream and, keeping as close as I could to its bank, recovered my position.

I am surprised that the Easterns, who are a lounging race, should not construct places where they could herd, and enjoy the coolness of the air that blows over the water; but I never have observed any attempt to clear away even the filth that is collected by the side of a stream. Then, as at Bagdad, it is a difficulty to pass for a hundred yards without interruption: broken walls, and heaps of dirt collected from the sweepings of the neighbouring houses, are constantly to be overcome; and every clear place is possessed by the women, who make it so wet in

their trips for water, that there is no great pleasure in walking over it.

It was past sunset when I reached my lodging, and found my dinner prepared, and my kind host waiting, in some apprehension about me. Scarcely had our repast on the roof ended, when we were obliged to take cover for the night, in consequence of a heavy storm. The thunder was awful, and vivid flashes of lightning lit up the deserted roofs of my neighbours, for my recess was off the top of the house on which I slept last night, and, though under cover, one side of my nest was open. I think all the rats in the place took refuge with me, for such a clattering and squeaking I never witnessed; and as for the fleas! had my bed been stuck with pins and needles, I could not have suffered more.

I had just thrown myself down, when my Arab friend, who had stripped himself to the skin, with the exception of a coarse blanket about his loins, insisted upon my doing the same. This was killing a man with kindness I thought, and fought resolutely against such

a sacrifice to the fleas. It is a common practice among the Arabs in the hot weather to sleep perfectly naked; they must have stout skins indeed to resist the attacks made upon them by every description of insect. There was but poor chance of sleep, and I tossed and rolled till daylight at length relieved me, and enabled me to set off on a further excursion through Babylon.

Crossing the bridge at the dawn of day, I stopped for my usual cup at the nearest coffee-house, where, at all hours, the pot is boiling. My host saw me to the water-side, and I had some delicacy to overcome on his part before I could squeeze into his hand a present for his kindness to me. He seemed in earnest in his refusal to accept it; scruples melt, however, before gold and silver in the most marvellous manner, and a gift is the sweeter from having endeavoured to resist it. He deserved it indeed, I found when I mounted my mule; for he had, unperceived, tied a basket of bread and dates under one of my saddle-bags.

I passed out of the eastern portion of the town in company with droves of cattle on

their way to pasture. This part is not so large as that on the other side of the river, but there are some good houses in it, and, as the gardens are more numerous, it is probably the most agreeable quarter. The population of Hillah, until thinned by the plague the last two years, was about twelve thousand; it is now sadly reduced, and has suffered, like all the towns on the shores of the Tigris and Euphrates, the most appalling judgment.

I made all haste for the most conspicuous remains on this side of the water—the Mujillibie, and in about three hours reached it, keeping generally by the bank of the river; it was a hill to climb, and cost some labour. My Arab guide from Bagdad, who was now of my party, as we ascended, asked me if it had not been built in the days of Noah, even, as he said, *before those of Mohammed.* He had no great curiosity for such matters, however, and thought me a little silly for my pains: "I will sit down and smoke, while you roam about," said he, drawing out his flint and steel, and preparing his pipe, which he carried in his tobacco-pouch at his girdle. In a moment he

was as indifferent about the mound on which we stood, as the lizards that crept over it.

The crest of the highest point hung like a crag above what I may term a quarry, whence bricks had not long been taken away; for the process is nearly the same as that of quarrying masses of stone from the rock, so firmly has the cement attached the bricks together. Where they had been displaced, the layers of reeds or matting were visible, and portions of the bitumen hardened to stone hung still on them. No buildings could be more even or perfect than those parts which remain untouched. There is a uniformity in them that shows how probably this mass of sand now covers the site of one great fabric. The learned are divided, I believe, between the claims of this and the Tower of Nimrod for the seat of the Temple of Belus. I am unfit for these speculations, and must follow my province by describing the surface only.

The nearest ruin to me was that called by the Arabs "El Kasr;" it is much smaller than the Mujillibie, but is nearly similar in character. The Tower of Nimrod was visible, rising like the

mast of a ship from the ocean round it; and to the southward were various mounds, some of which had little mosques upon them. I descended from the height at a different part of it, and found that a broad and rapid stream divided me from the road where my mules were placed. I have not had practice enough to walk any distance in slippers, so was obliged to recover my position bare-footed. The banks were fortunately of sand, and I ran along nimbly enough. The Arabs call this stream, or rather, I should say, canal, "Neel Djedid:" it flows for some distance, and has a very good bridge over it. A couple of travellers were at rest by it, with whom my Arab protector remained to chat and smoke.

I continued my journey towards Bagdad unaccompanied by him, against the remonstrance of my muleteer, who followed me, however, when I persisted. In an hour after, I fell into an adventure, in consequence, that bid fair to be more serious than the Quixotic affair I had yesterday. On coming near to the river, which runs by the Khan-el-Mahawil, there are three mounds of earth in parallel lines at no great

distance from each other, and rising to about twelve feet high; the road is by a narrow way through them. I arrived at this little defile in company with my faithful esquire only, and riding in a careless way upon my ambling mule, meditating upon the wonderful overthrow of Babylon, and the present desolation of all around,—indeed half asleep from the heat of the sun and my own wise reflections,—when suddenly a guttural exclamation, which from the action that accompanied it meant, I conceive, "Stand and deliver!" aroused me from my reverie. As ill-looking a fellow as could be conceived had seized my bridle, and with a club in his hand, which he had raised to within a foot of my head, stood ready to strike; his companion had performed the same manœuvre on Hassan and his mule: he however instantly jumped off, and shouting to me "There are only two," grappled his opponent by the throat; I resolved to keep my seat, and, beating down the weapon of my man, urged forward the mule that I might overthrow him.

We had just completed a victory, when from behind the second line sprung two others to the

rescue; while a fifth and sixth debouched from the third, and posted themselves in the middle of the defile, with their matchlocks pointed at us: we were now in what Mrs. Trollope's charioteer would have styled "an unhandsome fix;" I had recourse therefore to my usual plan, and proposed a parley. The thieves, for there was no doubt of their calling, seemed much puzzled by our appearance, for we had but little of the air of common travellers in the Island, as the part between the two rivers is called by the Arabs,—El Djezirah: they were neither disposed to treat nor to act with any violence, but with much modesty agreed to allow us to continue our journey on foot, if we gave them in addition to our animals all the money we possessed.

This was the ultimatum, and they took their disposition to enforce it. Again our bridles were seized, while the matchlock-men, their matches lit, stood at their post: matchlocks unfortunately never miss fire, but there was a chance of their missing us; and by this time the muleteer arrived, so we determined upon a charge. Mules, alas! are little calculated for

the honours of war, and, encumbered as we were with saddle-bags, and seated upon large pack-saddles, we were as little fitted for a fray as our chargers: we drew close together, and threw off the men that had hold of the halters, which I have hitherto dignified by the name of bridle.

I must now however tell the truth. Laying back their ears, the beasts as we lashed them on began to kick, and evince every mark of a resolution to remain where they were, and abide by the consequences. One of my own particular opponents drew out a pistol, and, ascending the nearest mound, sat upon his haunches and pointed it at my head. I had little to apprehend from this however, for I observed that the pan was open when he drew it out, and that it was not primed: I mentioned my discovery to Hassan, who was so delighted, for he had great misgivings about the pistol, that he raised his leg, and drawing his knee towards his eye, levelled it at the holder of it and shouted "bo!" with the fun of a schoolboy. He was a brave lad, and unacquainted I am certain with fear of every description. There

is something in being unarmed among a crowd of matchlocks and pistols, however, that might very naturally have disconcerted bolder spirits; so, such joy at finding less danger than we apprehended is not surprising: it had an admirable effect, for the Arabs, who could not very well make us out, now thought they had indeed met with singular customers, and, laughing heartily at Hassan's explosion, proposed a conversation themselves.

"Wullah!" cried the man with the pistol, "who the devil are you?" "Pilgrims from Babel," was the reply; "and we are under the care of an Arab of your tribe, whose honour is bound to keep us unmolested: he is behind, but will overtake us soon."

The appearance of confidence in Arab honour had an amazing effect upon them, and they were much softened by this address. "What have you in your bag?" said one to me, peeping into that which held a large brick, the most perfect I could find at Nimrod's Tower, for a Jewish missionary in Bagdad to whom I had promised a relic from the land of the Captivity. "What is it?" they all cried to my

curious friend. "A brick," said he, laughing; while every one muttered in astonishment, "A brick!" and drew closely to be convinced by their own eyes. They looked at the brick, and then at me, with an expression of surprise; and turned to examine Hassan's bags, who had also a collection from Babylon of broken bricks and pieces of pottery.

"They are both fools," said the robber, "we shall get nothing from them; let us wait for the Arab, and see if they are liars as well."

Having no alternative but to comply with their terms, we fell into the positions that we had occupied before the scrutiny of the bags; my foe with the harmless pistol sitting aloft with it pointed, as before, at me. I resolved not to dismount, and made Hassan keep close to my side; the mule-driver sat down between his animals, and two of the Arabs fell to the rear. After a few questions we became silent on both sides, and there seemed no probability of our ridiculous situation being enlivened by any fresh arrival. I was afraid to draw out my watch, and my own impatience had counted fully two hours, when at a long distance on the plain we

perceived three figures: the Arabs had as yet proved their faith nobly; but there is among all races a limit to forbearance, and I felt every moment that that limit was approaching.

The three figures grew larger and larger, and were evidently coming towards us; at length they began to run, and I saw that at any rate we were perceived by them, and they would alter our present position. One of them was indeed Abd-ul-Azee, my guide; he flew towards me with the speed of the gazelle without noticing the guard, and, giving my mule a blow with his stick, called out "Get on!" I obeyed with great readiness. "El oalad!—a child!" resounded on all sides; and my former enemies crowded round him, and kissed him as if he really had been a child of their own, instead of their common mother the Desert. After the salutations were ended, they advanced towards me and bade me go in peace, saying, "You do well to trust the children, you are now quite safe."

This rencontre occurred close to a village, yet not a soul during our detention appeared; we were concealed by the mounds which formed the ambuscade; they purposely however

kept the rear open, that they might be prepared for any arrival from Hillah. I remained for a few minutes under the shadow of a wall beyond Mahawil, and, having drunk a skin of butter-milk, continued my journey.

CHAPTER XV.

Englishmen in the East.—Their ridiculous manner of arming themselves.—Good-humour and indifference the best safeguards among the Arabs.—Violent altercation.—Attack on our Khan.—A Jewish matron in search of her child.—Solitude of the Desert.—An Arab traveller.—Birz-el-Nimrood.—Arab Lady and her escort.—Fording the Tigris.—Gate of Bagdad.

AFTER my little adventure, I had good reason to be pleased that I had taken the precaution of leaving my arms at Bagdad. There has always appeared to me something ridiculous in the manner Englishmen arm themselves when travelling in the East; more weapons than hands must be an absurdity at all times, but particularly when numbers are against you. Among the instances of fatal attacks that I have heard of in this country, the murders have generally been caused by the imprudence of the parties attacked. I do not think the Arabs ever mean

to shed blood on the first onset, but they will never forgive its being shed. The moment, therefore, a wound is inflicted, there is an end of every chance of salvation; not only the aggressor, but all in his train must pay for his rashness, — for surely there is no bravery in firing into a crowd, and endeavouring to gallop off, which would naturally be the plan after the discharge of the battery of rifles and pistols. Let those who mean to die, certainly fight it out; but I recommend all travellers, when the numbers are against them, to submit with a good grace, unless violence be first offered to them. Good-humour and indifference, which it is hard, I confess, to assume, are the great safeguards among the Arabs of the Desert; put always confidence in their hospitality and good faith, for, savages though they be, they have some of the noblest qualities of our nature.

Before sunset I was very happy to finish my day's journey at Secunderia, where the most complete stillness reigned, until a violent altercation arose upon the subject of buckshish between the people of the khan and my own. They asked for my coffee nearly ten times

more than in the most liberal mood I should have been disposed to give: I resolutely, therefore, resisted their demand; and being alone upon this my second visit, they were determined that I should enjoy the full burst of their hatred to all the Nazarenes, and abused me most outrageously: my Arab was now neutral, for his power only extended to the desert.

I had several good reasons, I thought, for refusing to comply with their charges, the principal of which was in itself sufficient, namely, that it exceeded by a great deal the money I had in my possession; for I purposed, when I left Bagdad, to be but a light booty to any who might covet my property. Never can patience be more necessary than to a forlorn traveller in the East. I sat doggedly against the wall, and, smoking a narguileh, turned as deaf an ear as I could to the clamour about me: I was an accursed dog, they said, and the father of dogs innumerable. I bore it all, however, with the firmness of a martyr. It is beneath a man to grow angry in such a situation, and highly injurious to a traveller.

I am not sorry, much as I am put to it to

forbear, that I have chosen my present unattended manner of travelling. I see more, I think, and certainly hear more: an escort would have deprived me of the pleasure of triumphing over rage and rudeness by an exhibition of philosophy that at length overcame my assailants; they gave in in despair, and when it was dark I spread my carpet on my former resting-place in the midst of the khan, and very soon was fast asleep.

Adventures, however, came thick upon me. I have mentioned the strong door of the khan, and its many bolts. We were the only possessors of the place, and had fastened it. About ten o'clock, I was roused from my dreams by the most tremendous attack upon this said door that can be imagined. I leaped upon my feet, and seized the Arab's spear that was lying by my side. It seemed to me that a hundred sledge-hammers at least were at work upon the door. Horses were neighing, asses braying, and people shouting, while camels occasionally added their gurgling sound to the concert.

"What can this mean?" thought I, when

open flew the doors, and in poured a torrent of animals, and men and women, that in an instant crowded the court. Everything was in confusion; the people racing about, they did not seem to know why; women screaming for their lords, and lords for their ladies; mules threw off their loads, and tumbled over those of their neighbours helter skelter in every direction: men were quarrelling for resting-places, and women apparently cheering them on. One shrill voice rose above the general din, and, proceeding from a muffled figure that was not far from me, fixed my attention. She was standing sentry over a couple of bags and carpets, which she seemed afraid to leave for a moment. "Yacoob!" she shouted, "Yacoob! where is Ibraheem," and unveiling herself, commenced to search about her baggage: he was nowhere to be found, and, wailing bitterly, she again called upon Jacob. She was neither old nor ugly, and was, as the Arab at once declared from her voice, a Jewess.

Again "Yacoob!" rose above the tumult, and "Where, where is Ibraheem?" From an opposite corner, at length, a responsive note mingled

in concert with hers in reply, and spoke some comfort to her. Her Jacob was at that moment engaged in a furious argument about one of the recesses I have described whence an Arab merchant had ejected sundry cooking vessels, by which he proposed to establish a prior claim. It seemed to me, that the Arab had no other right for what he had done, than the fact, which was not to be defended, of poor Jacob being a Jew. I observed soon after that he was worsted in the matter, and was obliged to yield to the true believer.

In the dialogue that was carried on between Jacob and his Miriam,—for that was the name,—it seemed that little Abraham had been placed by his father on the platform where I had been sleeping, lest he should have been trodden to death; and, having crawled about, had discovered that he might as well have been in the flying island, for four feet was to poor Abraham an elevation beyond all the castles in the air that his little fancy had ever built. My party were the only occupants of the place, and he crept towards us, and had just reached my saddle-bags, which

always make my pillow, and was in ambuscade behind them, when "Ibraheem!" in his mother's tenderest tones reached his ears. He was a stout boy of about two years old, and the possessor of most formidable lungs, which he exercised in such a manner close to my ears, that with the other uproar I was nearly driven frantic. I endeavoured to quiet him without effect, for I could neither coax in Arabic nor Hebrew; the mother stood yelping at the foot of the platform, while he squalled from my pillow: but neither would advance a step; she from apprehension of the Turk she took me for, and Master Abraham from some wiser notion which I cannot divine.

I tried to dislodge him; but the agony of his screaming putting it out of the question, Miriam called her Yacoob to the rescue. Ibraheem, however, had taken such a fancy to the terrace that nothing would induce him to quit it quietly; and the father, having been beaten from his first hold, brought his carpets to within a few feet of mine. Peace, I thought, was now at an end for the night; so I rose suddenly, and ordered my mules, and in a very few minutes

left the noisy caravan in possession of the place. They were on their way to Hillah; I had the advantage, therefore, of experiencing the mode of travelling that was recommended to me, without the misfortune of belonging to the crowd.

When I got out of the village, I took the Arab up behind me, and the muleteer mounted upon the crupper of Hassan's mule. It was a clear and bright night; the moon was nearly at the full, and most delightful was the midnight air as we trotted in silence over the waste. It is in the stillness of night that the solitude of the desert is most impressive; and the loneliness of our little party gave perfect liberty to meditation: the amble of the mules was so easy that all were soon asleep, with the exception of myself; and I felt the time and place so suited to further adventure, that I had made up my mind to fall in with one.

I was disappointed, however; we met with a single traveller only, an Arab who was going to Bagdad. He joined us, and a little

after daylight we reached the khan where we had breakfasted before, and made a meal again on butter-milk and bread. Soon after sunrise we departed, accompanied still by our companion of the night. He was mounted on a very beautiful grey mare, and had a foal of a week old trotting behind her. He was well armed, and carried a long spear.

To avoid the flood, we steered towards a high tower, called by the Arabs also "Birz-el-Nimrood;" a circumstance that has induced some travellers of former days to place the site of Babylon within a short distance of Bagdad: the neighbourhood of this tower, near which runs a river, that has a ruined khan upon its bank, is called "Accad;" another instance of the singular continuation of a name from so remote a period.

We overtook, by the river-side, an Arab lady, mounted on a fine horse, and attended by a large escort. She had just arrived, and, finding the water too deep to ford, she dismounted, and sat with her back to the stream until the men had swam across: from her legs I could per-

ceive that she was very fair; her face was well screened, and she sat her steed comfortably enough in his passage over.

When we had reached to the middle of the river, the Arab perceived that his foal had not followed. It stood upon the bank, which was about eight feet above the surface, looking after its dam. He merely called to it "Come, come;" and without hesitation it leaped into the stream, and, after a little floundering, swam most admirably. The Arab was so pleased that he got off his mare to pet her foal, and, caressing it for some minutes, called it repeatedly a true Arab. It was a beautiful little creature, and had a talisman, sewn in a piece of cloth, about its neck.

We had two long ferries to make before we arrived at the Tigris; the day was very hot, and the crowd of travellers immense. It was far from agreeable to wait for more than an hour at each before it fell to our lot, for the Charon of the basket was most exact in giving every one his turn. The animals were all cast loose, and suffered to find their own way across: the moment they reached the opposite shore, they

made good use of their time, and scampered away to a patch of grass at some distance; and, hot as it was, we all became engaged in a general race as soon as we got out of the boats. This might have been foreseen; but the Mussulmans trouble themselves not about the future.

I have often observed that nothing can take place in the East without an uproar. Whether it arise from a natural propensity to cavil, or the general emphasis of the conversation, I know not; but the slightest excursion is attended by a noise and confusion perfectly bewildering. The tumult of the ferries was frightful, and the time lost in dispute about the matter of a penny would have sufficed for the performance of several miles.

Just at three o'clock, after a journey of fifteen hours, we entered the gate of Bagdad, and were assailed for buxus, by men who had some collection for custom entrusted to them. The Arabs always begin a resistance or an argument by the word "Leish?" or "Why?" which they ask in a tone that seems to say "Now answer that if you can," and plainly bespeaks a resolution not to be convinced by any reply to

it. It is generally, I think, taken in that sense too, and is a most useful monosyllable. The gate-keeper had nothing to say to my "Leish?" however; but instantly took his hand from the bridle, and let me pass.

It was now the 10th of May; I had been absent only five days. I had scarcely been still four hours at a time, and was indeed happy to return to the hospitality of my truly Christian friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

Overflow of the Tigris.—Intolerable heat of Bagdad.—The Plague. —Marks left by the disease on the inhabitants of Bagdad.— The Chief of Curdistan. — His cruelty. — A Royal Adventurer. —His captivity among the Turcomans. — Strangers in Bagdad. Outrages of Robbers during the Plague.—Mr. Grove, Mr. Parnell, and Mr. Cronan. — Embark for Bussorah. — Our vessel boarded by Turkish soldiers. — Crowded passengers. — Ctesiphon. — Canonization of the Prophet's Barber. — Communication with a fleet from Bussorah.—Ruins of Dair Ajoul. — Musquitoes.— Hammaniah. — Excessive heat. — Tamarisks.— Scene of confusion. — Solitude of the shores of the Tigris. — Ruined fort of Sheikh Zobiede. — Inundation.

May 12th. — DURING my absence I find the Tigris has again overflowed its banks; but the governor having shown a considerable degree of energy, making all work at the embankments that were thrown up to protect the city, no mischief has been done. The neighbourhood of Bagdad, as far as the eye can reach towards the east, is a desert; the cultivation extends principally along the borders of the river; a

flood, therefore, must produce a famine, if it do not injure the town.

I cannot conceive a situation better contrived for heat, than that chosen by the first Caliph for the seat of his dynasty. That tremendous plain may be well calculated for the marshalling of troops; but how escape from the suffocating air, which, as the season advances, is more and more inflamed! Early as it yet is, men and beasts appear to wither as well as the vegetable world. This destructive sultriness is, however, not the only visitation. The plague occasionally breaks out; and there is scarcely a person in Bagdad that does not bear the scar of the eruption on the skin, called by the French surgeons "Bouton d'Alep." The children are frightfully marked. I remember asking a man in Damascus, if he had ever been in this city. He drew up the sleeve of his vest, and, making no other reply, pointed to a cicatrice in his arm —a native of Bagdad is recognised by such a mark in a distant country: there is no cure for it, it lives its time, and then, drying up, stamps the seal upon the citizen that serves for ever to identify him. The women, with

whose beauty it sadly interferes, are not so spectral in their outward appearance as those of Damascus. Here all wear a red silk cover, with a light coloured stripe in it, and over their faces masks of horse-hair that admit the air, while they conceal the charms behind them.

I have been very much tempted to go into Curdistan, but I have prolonged my journey so greatly, that I must forego the opportunity that has been offered by the chief of that country himself. He put his uncle's eyes out, and, pretending to repent, sent an escort to the British Resident, to induce the surgeon to return with it, and, I believe, to put the old man's eyes in again. Mr. Ross has set out.

A brother of the late King of Oude is at this moment living at the Residency; his adventures would make a very admirable history. He is a pensioner of the East India Company, and some time ago set out on a pilgrimage to the holy places of every sect of Mohammedans. I know not where he has not been,—from Meshed, the tomb of the Imaun Reza, to those of the Patriarchs in Hebron. He has bowed before

the Caaba, and drunk of the waters of Zemzem, without losing, by the bye, a most heterodox predilection for stronger waters. He sometimes travelled like a prince, and at others, being robbed and beaten, with difficulty begged his way to shelter. He was taken by the Turcomans, and employed in the lowest offices. These scientific dealers are of the opinion of a great poet, that a delicate hand is the only mark of a gentleman now-a-days, and, judging from this infallible criterion of the station of their prisoners, fix the ransom, and allot the labour. The Nawab, from his soft palm, was turned over to the department of the women, and made to grind corn between two stones. He was at length ransomed, and is awaiting now an opportunity of returning into India.

Bagdad is completely the city of the stranger, for, although so fallen in its wealth, natives of all parts of the East are to be seen in the streets,—Persians, Turks, and Arabs, Armenians and Jews, with the natives of Cabool, Lahore, and Delhi; and to contrast with the wild air and picturesque costume of the Albanians,

are Seapoys of the Bombay presidency in the uniform of English soldiers, who, indeed, among the capacious trousers and flowing vests of their reckless brethren in arms, make but a graceless appearance. Dervishes on their pilgrimage perhaps to Meshed Ali, or Meshed Houssein, who assume the right of establishing themselves wherever they please, are sometimes seated in the door-way of a house, with all the paraphernalia of their mummery about them.

I observed one of these wanderers arrange himself in the porch of the British Residency. He knocked iron pins into the wall, on which he hung up his drinking-vessel, rosary, clothing, stick, and other matters, and, spreading a tiger-skin below them, seated himself upon it, and with a loud voice, recited some passages from the Koran: the servants endeavoured to move him; he was above such interruption, and, lifting his eyes to heaven, poured such a flood of Arabic ethics upon them, that they stood aghast: no one ventured to lay hands upon him, and during the heat of the day he made good his position.

A siege, an inundation, and a pestilence, were

too likely to afford a plentiful harvest to the profligate, who are ever in the way to take advantage of the calamities of mankind. A most systematic style of robbery was carried on throughout that frightful period; many who were before known to be poor, with sufficient effrontery suddenly appeared, when the disease was at an end, the richest men in the city. A band was organized under a leader who has been pointed out to me—a very fine-looking man, and certain quarters of the town were allotted to their separate depredations. It is the custom in every city of the East to inquire who knocks before the door is opened,—a sad proof of the uncertainty and suspicion that destroy each social relation in a despotic government. As the plunderers were answered from within, so they arranged the time for attack. If a strong voice replied to the knock, they moved on, imagining the plague had not yet entered the house; a more feeble inquiry, and the door was marked for a visit on the following night. If no answer were returned, they entered at once and took possession of all they found; and impatient of further

delay, if the faint accents denoted that death was not very far off, they despatched the sufferer at once, and added murder to their robbery.

May 20th.—To-morrow is fixed for our departure for Bussorah, which we have with much pleasure delayed, that Mr. Grove might join us. He is on his way to India, in furtherance of the sole object for which he lives. Mr. Parnell and Mr. Cronan remain still in Bagdad. Accustomed more to associate among men whose thoughts seldom reach beyond this world and themselves, I will not trust myself to speak of the happiness I have enjoyed in the society I am now going to leave; for were I to express the admiration that such uncommon devotion and self-sacrifice, such universal charity and benevolence, have excited in me, I should offend those who seek not to have the good they do known.

May 21st.—We embarked at five o'clock, having spent a busy and interesting day at the Residency, and in half-an-hour began to drop down the Tigris. We found the boat as full of people as it could be, and crammed from head to stern

with baggage. The noise was beyond all that can be conceived. With a light breeze we passed, in about twenty minutes, the walls of Bagdad, which, in many parts, have been breached by the water. Gardens border the stream, composed of dates, pomegranates, mulberries, lemons, oranges, and occasionally figs. Before sunset we reached the village of Carah-dee, seated among date-trees, but having more the appearance of ruined ovens than inhabited houses.

A boat, laden with Turkish soldiers, boarded us, and insisted upon a passage to Bussorah. As we were already full to overflowing, this was a little too much; we had remonstrated before with the master on the crowded state of his boat, and insisted at length on his running in to the shore, and discharging a portion of the passengers. The Turks succeeded in coming on board, and we had the most complete uproar I ever witnessed to get them out again.

We stood to see the money paid back to twenty of our would-be fellow-travellers, who were convinced, after a little storm, of the impossibility of our going on, unless the number

was thus reduced. When the moon rose, we again started: our boat is about thirty feet long, and we have, even now, eighty souls within it: we ourselves are four beneath a canopy of very small space at the stern, while the others are huddled together among their boxes and bags in all attitudes and positions: the night is beautiful; we float quietly down the smooth stream, lighted by the stars. The banks are low; no trees and no habitations to enliven them.

May 22nd. — At daylight this morning we came to for a short time, under a high mound with fragments of bricks about it; this was Ctesiphon: on the opposite shore are similar heaps where Seleucia stood. Half a mile from the former is the front of an extensive building, called by the Arabs "Tauk-el-Kesra," or the arch of Chosroes: it possesses no remains of extraordinary taste or ornament, but, in the name it bears, speaks of splendour and of power now eclipsed by a simple tomb standing close to it, to which thousands flock in honour of the memory of a barber.

Here blazed the fleet of Julian before he com-

menced his fatal march, and boats now land pilgrims of a religion then unknown, to worship at the shrine of the man who once shaved their prophet! This is, I believe, the cause of "Suleiman Pauk" being in a manner canonized; and a very admirable lesson for vain-glory and ambition it is! Indeed, the laughing philosopher would never be at a loss for matter for his mirth on the desolate banks of the Tigris, where the world seems to have returned to vacancy, and the rapid transitions from all to nothing arrest the observation at every step.

The river is in this place about the same breadth as at Bagdad; the banks are low, and fringed only by liquorice, which grows to the height of three or four feet: from the face of the stream being now much swollen, we can see to a great distance; but on each side look over a desert.

We are now, as the sun is sinking, abreast of a Mussulman tomb, called the Tanji; the river has increased to nearly five hundred yards broad, and the current runs at about four miles an hour. We met a fleet of vessels

from Bussorah laden with skins, creeping slowly up: we sent a letter on board one of them, which was delivered in the midst of the river by a swimmer from our party, to one who came from the other side; he took it between his teeth like a dog, and returned to his boat: neither vessel waited a moment.

There are now on the banks two large flocks of cattle, with women and children who show that the tents of the tribe are not far off, although we cannot, from the heaps of ruins that reach to the edge, perceive them. The animals are small, and resemble so much those of Bengal, that I may fancy myself on the bosom of the Ganges.

May 23rd. — During the night, we passed the ruins of Dair Ajoul, where was once a flourishing monastery; the banks were low, and the river very winding. It is a beautiful moonlight night, but we are plagued by more musquitoes than I ever remember to have seen before; the air was literally darkened by them, and to sleep was impossible: these are ancient plagues, and have in their posterity survived kingdoms and dynasties. Julian's army was

harassed by swarms of insects—I am not the more reconciled on that account.

At daylight we had reached a spot marked by mounds, called now Hammaniah, near which were two boats taking in wood for Bagdad; there are no trees, however, — nothing but brush-wood and low shrubs. The waters are very much out, and in some parts the country is so flooded as to render it difficult to discern the banks of the river. The heat is excessive; the thermometer within our canopy was at noon ninety-three degrees, and now, 3 P.M., it stands at ninety-seven degrees at the edge of our awning, through which the sun shines, alas! too brightly. The mercury rose to one hundred and fifteen degrees in a few minutes: we have tied blankets in all directions to protect us, for the course of the stream exposes us on every side by turns, and we lie in a "darkness visible," warring against the flies, which buzz in myriads about us.

There is a light breeze, and we are able to sail. The banks are covered with tamarisks, now in flower, which wave prettily above the stream like plumes of feathers: in most parts

they are standing in the water, as we had occasion this morning to prove. While in full sail we ran in among them, and with much difficulty got disentangled: instead of lowering the sail, our boatmen endeavoured to push out of their dilemma against its power, and became more and more embarrassed. All the slumbering musquitoes were roused from their flowery beds, and shaken in clouds upon us. The sailors, as they term themselves, grew angry, and taunted each other with being a dishonour to Bagdad; while the passengers joined in the clamour, afraid that their goods piled up in the centre would be swept away. We only required a lion—for sometimes they make their lair by the banks—to jump in among us to complete the confusion; and I thought occasionally, from the tumult, that such a crisis had arrived.

We are at peace now, and sail quietly down. Nothing can be more deserted, more silent, than the shores of the Tigris: we see not a living thing, nor hear a sound even of the wild bird, or the occasional splash of a fish.

At three o'clock we passed some mounds,

called by the Arabs Humleh, and now we are opposite the ruined fort of "Sheikh Zobeide:" here the river winds very much, and is broader than at Bagdad; the land is so inundated, that no Arab tribe is able to come down to the banks, which are a little higher than the country. The pasture is now growing luxuriantly upon them.

CHAPTER XVII.

Our vessel made fast for the night.—Wife of a Turkish soldier.—Torment inflicted by the Musquitoes.—The river Hye.—Ruins of Wasil.—Celebration of a festival.—Grotesque dance.—Moonlight nights.—Nightingales.—Our vessel aground.—Arab horse-dealer.—A dispute.—Buffaloes.—The Euphrates.—Shoogh-Shookh.—Our new boat.—Village of Chenie.—Flocks of Pelicans.—Escape from a party of Arabs.—Scruples of a Christian scribe.—Quarrel between the Arabs of Montifieck and those of Zoheir.—Junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates.—A breeze.—The Montifieck country.—Mouth of Bussorah Creek.

June 24.—YESTERDAY evening we had a delightful breeze from the north-west, which carried us through the remainder of the day in good style. As it became dark, the Bagdad sailors declared they were afraid to go on, and, resolving to stop all night, ran into a bank of tamarisks, and made fast. The musquitoes rushed out, and attacked us with greater violence and in greater number than before; we were absolutely torn to pieces, and in agony

urged the people forward: the passengers objected to this, and scrambled out of the boat, headed by a Turkish soldier, who had his wife with him; she made her appearance, for the first time, to shuffle along the shore in her scarlet silk cover. Being the only woman among us, she is most rigidly secluded; and lives in a hold of the vessel, about the size of her trunk, in which, I am sure, she might find a more comfortable lodging: there is no space for her to move round; and there, poor creature! has she been fixed, like the sitting figure of an Egyptian deity, since we left Bagdad.

The musquitoes have been our friends on this occasion; for, assailing the black skins as well as the white, they beat us from the shore, and the sailors yielded to our cries to be off. We passed the night on the wooden awning of our little cabin, and were doubled up in a most absurd manner, with five or six people sleeping upon it besides ourselves: there was no rest for us, however. I have become so sensitive that I can discriminate between the sting of each species: there are three most conspicuous, — a very light-coloured and soft-stinging

insect, a dapple-grey and most active tormentor, with a dark and terrible assailant,—the most formidable lance of the army, whose war-cry is in just proportion to his prowess; it is enough to bring on madness.

About two in the morning, passing a poor village on the right bank, we turned into the Hye, and left the Tigris winding away towards the north. At daylight we were near a ruined fort: "We are now drawing more into the scenes of the wars of the Mohammedans," said Hassan. The Hye is about forty yards broad, very prettily bordered by tamarisks, and now and then a spreading poplar; the former grow larger here than on the banks of the Tigris. This river being so much narrower, they do not seem out of proportion to it, and give to the banks the appearance of being well wooded.

At nine o'clock we arrived at the first habitation of any size that we have seen since leaving Bagdad, — "Koot-el-Hye." The people have brought us sheep, and butter-milk:— On the plain beyond, is a large encampment of Arabs in tents and huts of matting mixed together. They neither seem wealthy

nor comfortable, and their encampments are far from ornamental to the flat shores.

A little beyond Koot, we entered a narrow river, a branch of the Hye, which the Arabs name "el Amaa;" and in four hours returned to the main stream. We have met with neither interest nor variety: the river runs rapidly, and is in this part of a good breadth; it is high, and reaches nearly to the level of the country. Embankments of a very few feet would prevent its flooding it.

We have just passed the ruins of the Arabian city of Wasil; a camp of Arabs is near it. They are celebrating some festival, and dancing in a ring, with very grotesque capers, to a merry tune that has a pleasing effect. I see occasionally the glitter of swords, and hear the sound of fire-arms. We have some Bedouin passengers on board, who, animated by the music, have kicked the rest of the company out of the way, and cleared a space in the fore part of the boat, where they are now dancing with great glee, clapping their hands and beating time with their feet to the chorus, which they sing: as they grow warm, they draw their swords and

whirl them over their heads, or clash them together, and, turning sharply round, fire off their matchlocks, and load them again, to the music. They occasionally discharge balls, and do not seem very particular where they go; indeed, the nearer the approach to mischief, the louder they sing, and the more earnestly they dance. An emulation has been excited by this volunteer dance on our side, among those of the shore, some of whom have approached the river: we have the advantage of the wildest scene that can be conceived, and some risk from the random firing of the figurants to heighten it.

May 25th.—The magnificent nights, now that the moon is nearly full, are to an inhabitant of a more vapoury climate inconceivable; it is possible to read the minutest print as we lie upon the deck. The river became narrower, and the tamarisks that waved over the stream were alive with nightingales, which sung with all the sweetness of the boasted bird of Eastern poetry; as we glided by, there was not a moment's cessation in their song: it would have been a scene of the most perfect delight, if the insects

that I have already spoken so much of, had not come in even greater crowds to temper it.

About nine o'clock we ran aground, and, going at a tolerable rate, lodged fast in the mud: every man jumped overboard, and they worked for an hour with great efforts, cheering themselves by a war-cry of the Bedouins, "Death is sweet! Call on the Prophet! Death is sweet! In the name of Mohammed!" We at length got off, and, sinking into silence and sleep, dropt quickly down the stream till daylight, when, a light breeze springing up, we were able to sail; the shores becoming more populous.

At eight o'clock we put all the Arabs of our party on shore at a Bedouin encampment, composed chiefly of huts made of the branches of date-trees. I found an Arab resting beneath a temporary covering of mats, who had just come from Bombay, and was on his return to his tribe. He has been in the habit of carrying horses for sale to India for some years, and complains of the trade having greatly fallen off; that there is no inducement now, in the prices given, to supply the market of that country with well-bred horses: those of an inferior description

only have been sent for some time, excepting when people have been expressly employed to seek others for a particular occasion.

We remained by this place for two hours. Immediately after quitting it, we passed a white tomb, to a certain Abbas, the son of Ali—Abbas-ibn-Ali—with one date-tree standing by it, the first that we have seen since the evening of our departure from Bagdad. The river is narrow and winding, and has many leafy encampments upon its borders. At "El Aszur," the third hour of prayer, we reached the village of Sela, where we were forced to stop, that the duty with the tribe who frequent the Hye should be arranged, although the master of the boat knew perfectly what he would be obliged to pay; in the common way of dealing among the Easterns, there was as much dispute about the matter as if they had never met before. The sheikh suggested an additional sum on our account, and the captain threw himself upon our mercy; but as we had considered this probability in the hire of the portion of the vessel we occupied, we refused to pay any. They debated the affair to so late

an hour, that they declared the money could not be settled till the morning; and, in spite of every effort to urge the boat on, we are forced to pass the night by the bank.

May 26th. — We were not able to move till after sun-rise, and with a fine breeze sailed merrily on: the river becoming very narrow and shallow, we had the diversion of running aground every half-hour, at least. The greater part of the day was thus passed in splashing in and out of the water, and in one continued shout. The country is exceedingly flat, not a tree or shrub to be seen; but in some parts we noticed a little corn and rice. Buffaloes are lying in the stream with their noses just above the water; it requires some skill to steer clear of them, for they do not show the least inclination to get out of the way. Large flocks of pelicans are scattered over the marshy ground, and some swim in the stream itself.

A great deal of winding, bumping, tumult, and every description of imprecation and invocation, brought us, at three o'clock P.M. into the Euphrates, an hour's sail above the village of Koot: at half past six in the evening, we

arrived at a considerable place called "Shoogh-Shookh," where there is a custom-house and wharf. Vessels in their passage up and down stop at this place; there is a wall round it, but the huts are all built of branches of the date, like those of the Bedouins.

The long narrow boat in which we had come from Bagdad, was not, we discovered here, intended for Bussorah, and with much difficulty the master of it succeeded in finding a smaller one, more calculated for the little sea formed after the junction of the two rivers "Shal-el-Arab." The boat we have hired is a very well built one, belonging to Grain, a port of some consequence below Bussorah. Many of our fellow-passengers have been anxious to continue with us, and provided they come without baggage we have agreed to take them. We are now famously crowded; we have a wooden canopy, as in the former boat, in the stern, covering a space of five feet square, but scarcely high enough to admit of our sitting upright under it. It is nine o'clock, and a beautiful night: the sail is loosened, and we are just off.

May 27th. — We contrived during the night, although in the main stream of the Euphrates, to run aground at least a dozen times, which we generally effected in full sail, and were so thrown together by the concussion, that we were compelled to make pillows of each other's bodies; with so many on the small deck, it was not possible to disentangle ourselves.

At daylight this morning we were close to a village called Chenie. The banks of the river are flooded to a great extent; so much so, that we should appear to be floating on a sea, but for the tall date-trees that rise in detached lines from the water: a few mat encampments are to be seen too, at long intervals apart; many of the huts are overthrown. Buffaloes and pelicans are the only living things that seem to enjoy themselves; the latter are in great flocks, and add a strong interest to the scene. They are the only birds on the face of the waters. Canoes are paddling over the grass that in some parts shows its head, and gliding among the distant trees. The banks of the Euphrates are not to be discerned, and those of the Tigris,

where land is visible, are desert. We have yet seen no crops of rice.

At twelve o'clock we passed the village of Medina, and were hailed by a party of Arabs from the shore. The wind and stream were with us. As we made no reply, the men pointed their matchlocks and threatened to fire; we were, however, out of reach before they could light their matches: some ran along the banks in pursuit, but, standing more towards the opposite side, we avoided them. It is all very well to run down in this manner; had we been toiling up, we should scarcely have escaped their exactions, for money was the only motive they could have had for desiring to stop us.

We shortly after overtook a canoe with an awning of red cloth over it, beneath which sat an Arab and his son. He boarded us, and begged to have a letter written to the sheikh of the Montifieck Arabs, who occupy the shore of the Euphrates to Bussorah; for, although a man of some consequence in the tribe, he had not the accomplishments of reading or writing. We

formed a circle round Michael, who prepared the paper; and the Arab commenced his dictation by uttering in a loud voice, "There is but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet:" the Syrian Christian at once demurred to this commencement, and looked aghast at the Arab, whose inquiring eyes rolled round the party, to ascertain, if possible, the difficulty. "Can you not write?" he exclaimed. Michael was resolute upon the ejection of Mohammed, and no one thought proper to explain the dilemma to the Arab, who feared treason, as we continued an argument on the subject in a strange tongue. It was at length decided that it was a form in which he could have no concern, and Michael was induced to write the terrible name, which I suspect he contrived to slur over after all.

The letter was addressed to the sheikh, who was before Zoheir besieging it, to inform him that a dependant had refused to obey the order he had received, and was prepared to resist the punishment he deserved. If Issa,—Jesus,—who has not long been chief of that important tribe, be as resolute as his predecessor, the refractory

chieftain will rue his opposition.' The quarrel between the Arabs of Montifieck and those of Zoheir was fomented by the Pasha of Bagdad, who was anxious to punish the latter, and according to the common policy of the Turk towards the Bedouins employed the first against them. To encourage feuds among the tribes is the only safe course, perhaps, for the Turks, who, greatly disliked by them, would be easily overthrown, should they ever unite against them.

Ali Pasha of Bagdad, however, finding the siege of the town prolonged beyond his expectation, expressed a desire to put an end to the war, to which the sheikh replied: "The nature of the quarrel has now changed: many of my tribe have been killed, and some even of my own family; I will not, therefore, move from Zoheir till I have had every drop of blood in the town." This city is celebrated in the wars of the Mohammedans as the field of the battle of the Camel; when the favourite wife of the Prophet, Ayesha, mounted upon a camel, and saw seventy of her attendants killed in succession at her bridle before she fell into the hands of Ali.

At four P. M. we reached Korna, where the rivers join; it is prettily situated upón a point of land well wooded, and admirably calculated for a fort. It commands the mouths of both the Tigris and Euphrates, and looks directly down the "Shal-el-Arab," or River of the Arab. There is here a crazy brig belonging to the Pashalic of Bagdad, carrying six guns. We were hailed as we passed, but the name of the "Balioz Beg," as the Resident is styled, was sufficient passport.

The great river is, in some parts, fully six hundred yards broad, with plenty of water, under the influence of the tides, which are felt in the Tigris even beyond the junction. The only reason that the boatmen of the rivers have for running through the Hye into the Euphrates, instead of following the Tigris to its mouth, is the importance of Shoogh-Shookh, over every other station between Bagdad and Bussorah. Vessels from the Persian Gulf come up to it, and transfer their goods to boats more calculated for river navigation; while those belonging to the higher parts go no lower.

On the banks of the Tigris from Bagdad to Korna there is not a village. The Beni-Lam Arabs, who occupy the greater portion of the banks, were driven away from them by the flood, and we saw not even a hut until we entered the Hye, and not for two hours after we left Korna were any habitations visible.

At six in the evening we passed a tomb, and menaul, called Dair, with an abundance of date-trees, and encampments of Arabs among them, —the commencement of the position of the Montifiecks: the sun set, with a delightful breeze, and our sailors, being alarmed, took down the large sail, and bent a small one so that our rate was likely to be much delayed: we opposed the change violently, and, after the usual clamour, succeeded in getting the first up again. We soon reached the heart of the Montifieck country; the encampments run parallel to the river for a long way, composed, as all I have seen are, of matting of the palm-leaves: they have a most ragged and poor appearance, and so uncomfortable compared to those of Syria, either in the Desert or sea-

coast, that the date-trees, however they may be a blessing in other respects, are not so in the affair of houses.

At ten, at night, we reached the mouth of Bussorah Creek, twenty-four hours from Shoogh-Shookh. It is too late to seek adventure in the city; and, more doubled together than we were last night, we must wait patiently till the dawn.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Embark in a Canoe.—Reinforcement of Arabs.—Singular variety in Eastern travelling.—Bussorah.—A happy surprise.—Project for navigating the Tigris and the Euphrates by Steam. — Local Authorities favourable to the plan.—Its importance to the East. —Shore of Persia.—Warlike cruise to recover a piece of Canvas and a Flag-staff.—Surrender of the Thief.—Corgo.—Bushire.— First appearance of Persia.—A Revolution. — Squadron in the Gulf. — Timour Meerza's visit to the Amherst sloop of war.— His retinue.—The Poet Laureat and Singer.

May 28th.—At daylight we left the river, and entered the creek, or streamlet, that runs past Bussorah, in a belen, the Arabic word for a canoe. There was very little water in it; the tide was running out, and some clumsy ships belonging to the Pashalic nearly choked up the way. If the channel were kept clean, and sweet too, it would be exceedingly pretty; each bank is thickly wooded, and the sun can

scarcely penetrate at any hour to the dark stream. The canoe swamped, and we were obliged to walk through the mud, and sit beneath a large tree till another could be found.

A strong reinforcement of Arabs passed us on their way to Zoheir; some were on horseback, and others on foot, armed with matchlocks and spears. Women followed with bread and milk upon their heads. They had a most picturesque appearance as they wound along the narrow way; such figures as, in the days of the crusades, thronged towards the camp of the Saracens. Zohier is old Bussorah, the Basra of the "Arabian Nights:" there was something in being in a manner cast away in so interesting a neighbourhood.

We were not long in our second canoe, it also swamped; and, after wading again in the mud up to our knees, we walked to the city. I am so accustomed to the singular variety in Eastern travelling that I take everything as a matter of course: I believe, if I should be told at the gate of a city that it was necessary to enter it on my head, I should without a

thought endeavour to do so. Bussorah has been a fine town, there is much mixture of poverty now with its lofty houses; the streets are wider than those of Bagdad. It also has been sadly reduced by the plague.

One of those happy surprises that sometimes compensate for all the privations of a tedious journey in one moment, awaited us here. We had been talking very much of the difficulty we should find in getting to Bushire, and, uncomfortable at the thought of a long delay, entered the Residency, where the purser of a brig of war belonging to the Indian navy met us in the court with a kind invitation from the captain, who had told him to wait till twelve o'clock for our arrival. She is to sail in the afternoon for the Persian Gulf. We are delighted at the escape in so fortunate a manner. I have just time to visit the Baths, and have only seen the Residency and the garden belonging to it.

Should the project, now in some respects on foot, of navigating these rivers by steam, be realized, and their shores become as well known as those of the Ganges or the Nile,—for, although

many difficulties will naturally be raised against the scheme at first, I do not despair of seeing it come to pass,—what a change may be effected in the Eastern world! The master of a steam-boat built in the Thames may regulate his course on the Euphrates by the bearings of the Tower of Babel! This would, indeed, have been a wild fancy but a few years ago; yet, now that the rivers have been surveyed and found practicable, where is the improbability?

The Resident at Bagdad, and those with whom I conversed on the subject, are as warm supporters of the plan, from a conviction of the readiness with which it will be assisted by the authorities, and the advantage that in every view will attend it, as those who have formed their opinions from the report of its facility on natural grounds. The late Pasha, Daoud, was so anxious for its success, that he had resolved to purchase a boat for the purpose himself; and, had he not been removed, the question would before this have been set at rest. The present governor is not less friendly in his inclinations, but the poverty of the Pashalic will

prevent any other demonstration on his part. I do not think there will be any great obstacle to overcome from the Arabs. A tribute must be paid to each tribe for passage through its territories, and, the sum once arranged, it will be foreign to their nature to break faith; they have as much right to levy such a duty as any civilized country has to tax the foreign vessels that enter its ports. As far as the interior relations are concerned, there will be nothing to apprehend. We may, I have heard it urged, however, open the way to our Eastern possessions for an European power: while Russia is paramount in Turkey, and all in all in Persia, we need scarcely fear suggesting a new road to her. The Persians have lately captured Erzeroum, and their advances tend but to the advantage of Russia whenever she may feel disposed to avail herself of it.

I am not one of those, however, who are apprehensive of a Russian invasion of India; yet, were such an event to occur, we should but anticipate our aggressors in the occupation of a line that would be so advantageous to them, and thereby prevent it. The canal that con-

nected the Tigris with the Euphrates may be traced from a short distance above Bagdad, and would cost little labour or expense to open it: it was by this passage that the Emperor Julian brought his fleet against Ctesiphon.

In order that Bagdad may benefit by the intercourse to be thus established, the best plan seems to be, that the Tigris should be the river navigated instead of the Euphrates, as far as the mouth of this canal. Thus the marshy ground on the shores of the latter stream, so likely to perplex during the high floods, would be avoided; and the passage made easy as far as Beer. While I write this, the surveys made by Captain Chesney last year may be already published, and more than I can have learnt be known. All writers on this country and Arabia, say it has declined since the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope: a renewal of the communication with India through it, therefore, may in some measure revive it; although the days when a Caliph showered pearls and gold over the head of a bride, and scattered towns for a scramble, can scarcely return.

May 29th. — We reached the Tigris brig of war at three o'clock yesterday afternoon, and found her getting under weigh. The river is very broad, a magnificent stream; it seems as far as Bussorah nearly an arm of the sea, the banks covered with date-trees. This morning we are in the Gulf, and have a view of the shore of Persia,—a range of high mountains to the eastward, from which the sun rose with true Oriental splendour: we are still on the smoothest sea, for there is not a breeze.

The brig, I find, has been on a cruise for the recovery of a piece of canvass and an abandoned flag-staff. We should be grateful for the high value set on these apparently trifling matters; but it seems the honour of England was in some way concerned in their fate, otherwise we might have been prisoners for many days in Bussorah. The Resident for the East India Company at Bushire took refuge during the plague on the island of Corgo, where he pitched a tent and built a temporary dwelling: on his return to his station he abandoned some portion of this settlement on the beach, which unfortunately tempted an Arab, and he stole

the canvass to make a sail for his boat. I fancy the whole Gulf was in an uproar; for the brig of war was despatched to vindicate the British name, and, discovering that the delinquent had sought the protection of an Arab tribe, demanded his person. As it is contrary to the Arab honour to deliver the meanest who has sought refuge in distress, the chief acknowledged that the man was amongst them, but hoped that he would not be required to break a pledge deemed so sacred, for he had given him protection. I hoped that the honour of England would have respected the most beautiful trait in the character of an uncivilized people,—but the loss of a sail was too much! so the guns were loaded, and a boat stealing out of a creek received a volley and disappeared. The poor culprit, lest he should bring vengeance on his protectors, resigned himself to his fate. He and his son are now on board close prisoners. He fancies that he has borne away the talisman of the British nation at least, and expects to be sacrificed to the fury of her evil genii.

May 30th.—We lost the whole of this day opposite Corgo—the scene of so much iniquity, and have brought the flag-staff on board, so that no more dishonour awaits us, I trust. The island of Carruck, once possessed by the Dutch, is not far from the sandy isle on which the flag of England waved. We shall be at Bushire to-morrow morning; the lightest breeze will carry us over such a summer sea.

May 31st.—We are at Bushire: we were abreast of the town at daylight. The first appearance of Persia is sad indeed. The town, like the peninsula on which it stands, is of the colour of sand, and the "Wind Towers," that sound so prettily in verse, are the most graceless elevations possible. There is one on the summit of each house. I am living in a tent at the Residency gate. So dirty and dilapidated a place as Bushire from without I never saw. I have, however, one fine prospect in the sea before me: behind is the main part of the city; while on my right and left hand are villages of mats, occupied generally by Arabs, some ruined and offensive with filth, dogs howling and prowling about them.

June 8th.—I may always repeat that an Eastern city is to a traveller a mirage, and to one from the solid West, who has learned more of their magnificence from stories that come to us, "plus Arabe qu'en Arabie," in every way a disappointment. Bushire is more singularly mixed with every description of habitation than any city I have seen. There are some very fine houses, with matted huts and tattered tents, broken walls, unfinished buildings, neat gardens and heaps of filth so tumbled together,—the grateful change occurring at every step,—that you can scarcely decide whether you are riding in a place inhabited by pigs or people. The gates of the city are in a state of ruin, and the guns dismounted lie outside.

A sort of revolution has lately taken place, in which one son of the Prince of Shiraz was put out of the government to make room for another, Timour Meerza, who now rules. These little affairs are here, I fancy, like thunderstorms; they come as frequently, and are as transient in their stay.

I am to embark to-morrow for Bombay in the Tigris, and am forced to leave Mr. Groves

and Captain Cotton behind me; the latter has been seriously ill, and there is no accommodation on board the brig for them.

There is nothing in Bushire to tempt me to stay: it stands at the point of a long sandy plain, the sea in its front, and behind a high range of barren hills, of a grand form, but destitute of trees and verdure. I do not remember that I was ever in a place that had so little attraction in it as this. It is exceedingly hot; the only agreeable time of the day to me is that which I pass in the sea in the morning before the sun rises.

There has not been a breeze to ruffle the water since I left Bussorah. The squadron in the Gulf is composed of two sloops of war and a ten-gun brig; there is a merchant-ship belonging to the Imaun of Muscat lying in the roads, and an English barque, that has just sailed for the river Euphrates.

Timour Meerza and his courtiers visited the Amherst sloop of war, and passed the greater part of the day on board. I accompanied the party, and cannot say much for the appearance or manner of the royal scion of Persia. He

has a handsome face, and appears to be about five-and-twenty years of age, but has all the marks of debauchery in his expression and person. His dress is merely a muslin shirt and trousers, with a leather belt about his waist. He was attended to the boat by a number of men with long switches in their hands, and received by them on his return. They bowed to the ground as he embarked and landed. A musician, a singer, an attendant for his pipe, and one to present sherbet, accompanied the procession, which occupied several boats throughout the morning.

Timour Meerza was very bountiful of his sherbet, which was delicious, made chiefly of roses; and, whenever he sat down a moment, his pipe was administered to him with a fresh supply of tobacco, for a Persian never smokes regularly. He draws his breath rapidly two or three times, and the instant the weed is alight sends it away. The singer was not idle, for, squatting at the prince's feet on the poop, he screeched long and loud enough to scare all the sea-birds from the Gulf. His song was compli-

mentary, as in duty bound, to his master: the voice of flattery is far from a soft and insinuating one here; it takes the attention by storm,—when addressed to a king's son at any rate,—for such a yell I never heard.

CHAPTER XIX.

Head-quarters of the Gulf Squadron.—Scene of the Fire-worshippers.—Tranquillity.—Intense heat.—Heavy dew.—Muscat, the hottest place on Earth.—Our salute answered from the Fort.—Navy of the Imaun of Muscat.—Streets of Muscat.—Arrival in Bombay.—Retrospect of my Journey.—Hire a passage to Calcutta.—Parting with my faithful esquire, Hassan.—His horror at seeing me in a Palanquin.—His opinion of the Oriental language.—Conclusion.

June 15th.—We sailed on the morning of the 11th, and crept slowly on with scarcely a breeze till the evening of the 18th, when we made Point Bassadore, in the island of Kishma, and on the next morning anchored in the roads. Here is the head-quarters of the Gulf squadron, and the depôt of naval stores. A Semaphore and a few Bungalows stand on a spit of sand, with a low range of barren hills behind, beyond which may shine, perhaps, "Kishma's amber

vines;" for on the coast there is but little show of sweetness or of beauty.

The passage between the main land and the island would make a magnificent position for a fleet, backed by a noble line of mountains, at the foot of which are many creeks where pirates used to haunt, and where now perhaps they but await less vigilance to commence their former depredations. The Arabs of the sea-coast are in their nature the same as their brethren of the inland plains. The ocean is their Desert, and they fancy they have a similar privilege over it; unlike the tribes of the Desert, however, they add cruelty to their love of plunder.

I rode about the island in the afternoon, and found little but sand: one or two ruined forts stand on the shore, built probably by the Portuguese. The interior is rich, however; grapes abound, and very delicious honey is made. The splendour of the islands of the Persian Gulf lives only in memory: it is delightful, nevertheless, to sail over the sea on which they are scattered.

June 20th.—The sea is as still as the calmest lake, the vessel scarcely moves. Arabia and Persia have been twice in view at the same time, where in the narrowest part the channel is scarcely more than fifty miles across between Musseldom and Gomberoon. We have passed over the scene of the "Fire-worshippers," not the least part of the pleasure that belongs to such sailing. The Peri might on such a day warble her lamentation for Araby's daughter without a ripple on the shores of Oman to disturb her!

The comfort of the day is, however, not equal to its beauty; the thermometer, since we left Bushire, has been at ninety-four degrees. In the nights we are fortunately able to sleep on deck. They are beautifully clear, but so heavy a dew falls that we are perfectly wet in the morning: the dew of Persia does no injury, it is said; and a bright scimitar may be exposed to it and not receive one stain. If the experience of ten nights be sufficient to confirm its innocence, I may venture to do so. We shall be at Muscat in the middle of this night.

June 22nd.—Muscat is esteemed the hottest place on earth, and the Arabs emphatically give it a peculiarly hot name, "El Jehannum,"—Hell. We anchored a little before daylight in the morning of the 21st, the hottest day in the northern hemisphere: so all was in favour of a good experiment. A wind from the shore blew all night so scorching and withering, that not one drop of dew fell. When I touched the iron stanchions on the poop as I descended, they were quite hot; the thermometer, standing under the awning, was at one hundred and three degrees.

As the day advanced, it exhibited only black rocks: from the ground we were in, none of the town was to be seen; two or three detached rocks stood in the sea, a passage between them forming the southern side of the harbour. The high range that bounds Arabia has not one blade of grass upon it, the very sand at its foot is black. The rising sun shone full upon it: had we been near enough, we should have seen the reflection of the ship, as in a mirror, on the smooth face of some of the hills. It is surely

the country of the Prince of the Black Isles. The wind grew hotter and drier, and may have been a simoom before it reached us.

When the sun rose, a salute was fired from the brig. After a long pause one gun replied from a battery in the face of a rock, then another from the opposite side, then six or seven together, while half the battery rolled into the sea. We could hear the screaming on shore, and the confusion, in consequence of this probable devotion of the fort to our honour; but a few more single shots at long intervals prevented such a disaster.

A number of very fine vessels lie in the harbour, belonging to the navy of the Imaun of Muscat. They were all built at Bombay, and one of them is considered the best ever launched from those docks. She is a beautiful model, but wretchedly filthy and neglected; the Imaun has not lately had any occasion to use his fleet.

I went on shore in a canoe; the landing-place is concealed from the view of the ships in the harbour. The Imaun was unfortunately ill, and

I could not see him. As it was too hot to explore the town, I sat among a crowd of Banians, who are very numerous here, in a small room, where I thought I should have melted away.

When the sun became low, I sauntered through the streets. The bazars are good, and that portion of the town facing the harbour is well built: the Imaun's palace is there; and probably there may yet be some remains of the Portuguese establishment, for the houses have too substantial an air for the work of Arabs. The city is singularly placed in the midst of rocks that must keep out all wind; when the sun has set, they glow like heated ovens. The bulk of the lower people live in matted huts in a narrow valley bounded by the black hills. The Bedouins are a very wild-looking race; they walk through the streets armed with matchlocks and swords, and carry on their left hands small round shields, their hair hanging loosely over their shoulders, the ends absolutely burnt brown by the heat of the sun.

I looked in vain for something green to re-

lieve my eyes, all was black and withered; and I was too happy to return to the ship again, perfectly ready to believe that Muscat deserves its infernal appellation.

We sailed this morning, and have entered the influence of the south-west monsoon.

I arrived in Bombay on the 29th of June, where it is time that my journey should end. I am too familiar with Oriental habits, by the different scenes that I have passed through for the last nine months, to feel the interest I should otherwise do in continuing to travel by Central India to the banks of the Nemna; there is too much sameness in all that meets the eye in the East, to enable the mind to preserve a proper elasticity in a long-continued journey. Novelty and variety are essentially necessary; for, alas! there is little adventure in the present sober age.

If I were to sum up my feelings, now that I am in a manner at home, I should say that they have been seldom otherwise than pleasing; that I have had a most delightful journey, without one difficulty or one day's privation: but I

must not lure those who prefer soft beds and rich fare to follow my steps, although I may venture to promise them an appetite for even greater variety than they are accustomed to enjoy.

I have taken a passage to Calcutta, and am to sail in a few days. My faithful esquire Hassan, who has reached at length a country he never before dreamt of, is to turn his excursion to a spiritual advantage. I have parted with him, and he returns to Egypt by a ship bound for Jidda, which will give him an opportunity of paying his duty at the Caabæ; this has reconciled him to leaving me.

If I were inclined to close my journey with a pathetic picture, I might paint his grief in very affecting terms, and they would be his own, that would do credit to one of much greater advantages in life than poor Hassan has had. An Arab's estimate of the inhabitants of India is not likely to be very favourable to their manhood. He was roaming one day through the streets, when I passed quickly in a palanquin. He recognised me, and ran

as fast as he could, till he caught me in the act of getting out of the luxurious machine. He gave me his shoulder to lean upon, and asked anxiously what was the matter. "I am not ill, Hassan," I replied. He stood a moment confounded, and, pointing to the palanquin, said with a mournful voice, as if he foresaw my fall from manhood. "By your head, master, what is this? If you are not sick, are you an old woman?" I never could mention a palanquin, after this discovery, that he did not shake his head and sigh.

I have said enough to show that in a quiet way Hassan was a good deal of a philosopher. He declared that the natives of India had but one word at ready command in their conversation, and that was "Money." I recommended him to learn the language, and he would find it more useful. When he gravely asked, "Pray sir, what is 'water', in their language?" I replied, "Pāne." He shook his head as if he had been reflecting a good deal on this matter, and said, "I thought so:—and what's the Italian for 'bread?' "Why, the same, certainly," I an-

swered, laughing. "Then if you please, sir, I will not learn the language; and I do not care now so much about leaving you." He formed his conclusions upon as slight grounds as wiser men have sometimes done, for he thought that all in the country would be to him an inversion, from the two examples he had already had.

I trust that I may not have been equally precipitate in my opinions.

THE END.

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